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# *Aruba* TODAY

On Top Of The News Email:news@arubatoday.com website: www.arubatoday.com Tel:+297 582-7800 Saturday, December 20, 2014



President Barack Obama holds an end-of-year news conference, at the White House in Washington, Dec. 19, 2014. The question-and-answer session was the first of its kind since the midterm elections, a period which has seen Obama take aggressive action to strike a climate agreement with China, re-open relations with Cuba, and initiate immigration reforms.

(Jabin Botsford/The New York Times)

## Obama Defends Policies at Year-End News Conference

**JULIE HIRSCHFELD DAVIS**  
© 2014 New York Times  
**WASHINGTON** - President Barack Obama defended his economic, health care and foreign policies Friday, declaring in a year-end news conference that he

has brought about a new U.S. resurgence and is energized about his final two years in office. "We are better positioned than we have been in a very long time," Obama said in a wide-ranging

year-end question-and-answer session that ended a period of extraordinary domestic and foreign policy changes at the White House. Obama also said Sony Pictures erred by deciding not

to release "The Interview" movie after hackers threatened violence if the movie about an assassination of the North Korean leaders was released. "Yes, I think they made a mistake," he said. "I wish

they would have spoken to me first. I would have told them, 'Do not get into a pattern where you are intimidated by these kinds of criminal attacks.'"

Continued on Page 3



# Sales for holiday shopping season come down to the wire

**ANNE D'INNOCENZIO**

**AP Retail Writer**

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Despite an early start, sales data provided to The Associated Press show that stores may once again have to rely on procrastinators to save the holiday shopping season.

Sales rose 1.8 percent from Nov. 1 through Monday compared with the same period a year ago, according to payment technology company First Data Corp.

The numbers are modest considering that the National Retail Federation, the nation's largest retail trade group, expects sales for the entire season — November and December — to rise 4.1 percent to \$616.9 billion.

The slow growth also comes at a time when retailers tried to do a number of things to jumpstart the season and encourage shoppers to spend. Some offered "holiday" discounts as early as Halloween instead of waiting until the day after Thanksgiving known as Black Friday. And more stores opened on



**Giselle Basurto, of Mexico, shops at a Kmart store in New York. Retail sales rose 1.8 percent from Nov. 1 through Monday, Dec. 15, 2014 according to data provided from First Data Corp., which tracks purchases at 800,000 stores including online. The modest growth comes despite the heavy discounting customary throughout the season. (AP Photo/John Minchillo)**

Thanksgiving Day itself to offer people early enticements to spend.

But the incentives seem to have backfired. Shoppers took advantage of the earlier sales and hours, but that had the effect of

syphoning away sales from Black Friday, which is typically the biggest sales day of the year.

"The numbers are lower than what people expected them to be so it will be interesting to see what

happens in the final days of the holiday shopping season," said Rishi Chhabra, First Data's vice president of information and analytics.

As a result of the modest sales, retailers are making a big final push to lure shoppers into stores. And they're employing tactics they've had to use since the recession.

Dennis May, CEO and president of Hhgregg Inc., said the consumer electronics chain added a "buy more, save more" sales event that is ending this week. And it's also extending the cutoff date for online shoppers who want to pick up their items in the store until noon Christmas Eve. Last year, the cutoff date was Dec. 23. "I think the consumer is very savvy," he said. "They're not shopping with abandon. They're not throwing their budgets to the wind." Major retailers including Macy's and Toys R Us are offering marathon shopping hours. Kohl's, for instance, is opening its stores for 132 hours straight until 6 p.m. Christmas Eve. That compares with 108-hour stretch last year. "Customers can rely on us around the clock for their last-minute gift-giving

solutions," said Michelle Gass, Kohl's chief customer officer.

Despite the frenzy, retailers don't necessarily have to panic. There still are big potential spending days ahead, including this Saturday, which some industry watchers are saying could be the biggest shopping day of the year. In fact, the average holiday shopper had completed only 52.9 percent of their holiday shopping as of December 10, according to a survey of more than 6,165 shoppers conducted by the retail trade group.

But retailers also have to watch their bottom lines. Shoppers have become more accustomed to deals, and many aren't willing to pay regular price anymore.


Indeed, C. Britt Beemer, chairman of America's Research Group, said 60 percent of 1,000 shoppers polled last weekend said they were only buying deals this holiday season. That compares with 40 percent last year.

But all the discounts eat away profits. According to First Data, the number of transactions rose 1.8 percent, but the average transaction was flat at \$73.85, showing how heavy discounting can hurt the bottom line.

"I don't think it's great out there," said Ron Friedman, head of the retail and consumer products group at accounting firm Marcum LLP who estimates that holiday sales will be up 2 percent from last year. "People are out in the stores and shopping, but they're all looking for deals.

Indeed, some shoppers are hesitant to spend a lot, despite some recent good economic news. Average gas prices nationally have dropped and the unemployment rate is at a six-year low. But some shoppers still struggle with higher costs and stagnant wages. "I have to still watch what I spend and make sure everything's on sale," said Teresa Conrad, 51, who was shopping recently at a suburban Indianapolis mall. □

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# Obama defends policies at year-end news conference

Continued from front

The president rejected critics who said he should not have opened relations with Cuba because of the nation's human rights record, arguing that decades of history had shown that maintaining the current policy would do nothing to improve matters on the island nation.

"I share the concerns of dissidents there and human rights activists that this is still a regime that represses its people," Obama said. "I don't anticipate overnight changes, but what I know deep in my bones is that if you've done the same thing for 50 years and nothing's changed, you should try something different if you want a different outcome." And while he said he had no plans to visit to Cuba in the near term, Obama recounted a friendly telephone call this week with President Raul Castro of Cuba. Obama said the two joked with each other about being long-winded and about Fidel Castro. After Obama apologized for speaking for so long during the call, he said, Castro told him: "You're still a young man, and you have still the chance to break Fidel's



**The first family, Sasha Obama, left, Malia Obama, President Barack Obama, and first lady Michelle Obama, in second row, walk to board Air Force One from Andrews Air Force Base, Md., Friday, Dec. 19, 2014, en route to their family vacation in Hawaii.**

(AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin)

record: He once spoke for seven hours straight."

The president's remarks came as he faces questions about how his administration will respond to the North Korean cyberattack and manage a historic opening with Cuba, as well as an array of other foreign

and domestic challenges. The news conference ends a six-week period when Obama aggressively used his presidential powers to take sweeping unilateral action on immigration, re-establish diplomatic and commercial ties with Cuba, strike a climate agreement

with China and press for strong rules on keeping the Internet free and open.

Obama suggested he has no intention to back down on that approach.

"My presidency's entering the fourth quarter," he added. "Interesting stuff happens in the fourth quar-

ter, and I'm looking forward to it."

Obama told reporters he is genuinely eager to forge compromises with the Republican Congress, including on revamping the nation's tax system, and said he would push for changes that make it simpler and fairer. He said he has been encouraged by conversations with some Republican leaders.

"I want to work with this new Congress to get things done," the president said. "We're going to disagree on some things, but there are going to be areas of agreement, and we've got to be able to make that happen, and that's going to involve compromise once in awhile."

He said the lame-duck session of Congress that closed this week showed that "perhaps that spirit of compromise may be coming to the fore."

Obama said he would push for changes to rules that allowed U.S. companies to "on paper" move their headquarters to another country in order to avoid taxes.

"I think that needs to be fixed," he said.

After the news conference, Obama plans to leave for his annual family trip to Hawaii. □





# US theater shooter's parents plead for his life

**SADIE GURMAN**  
**Associated Press**

**DENVER (AP)** — The parents of the gunman who killed 12 people at a Colorado movie theater pleaded Friday for his life to be spared through a plea bargain —rekindling the long-running, emotional debate about whether the horrific details of the mass killing should be played out at his upcoming trial. The statement released by Robert and Arlene Holmes emphasized a key legal issue in the tortured history of the case — James Holmes' mental state when he staged the July 2012 attack, and whether he should die if convicted of the crime. Holmes has pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity to the charges filed after the attack during a showing of

a Batman movie in Aurora, outside Denver. Seventy people were also injured. "He is a human being gripped by a severe mental illness," the parents wrote in just their second public comments since the attack. "We have always loved him, and we do not want him to be executed." The statement also thrust the mass shooting into the spotlight once again at a time of heightened concerns over theater safety. The hackers who prompted Sony to withhold the release of "The Interview" had threatened violence against theaters. Prosecutors previously rejected at least one proposed plea deal made by attorneys for Holmes, criticizing the lawyers for publicizing the offer and calling it



**Robert and Arlene Holmes, the parents of Aurora theater shooting suspect James Holmes, arrive at district court for the arraignment of their son in Centennial, Colo. Robert and Arlene Holmes are asking that their son not receive the death penalty. Jury selection is scheduled to begin in January 2015, for the 2012 attack in Aurora that killed 12 people and injured 70.**

(AP Photo/Ed Andrieski)

a ploy meant to draw the public and the judge into what should be private plea negotiations. They said the proposal could not be considered genuine because the defense repeatedly refused to give them information needed to evaluate it. No details were provided on the information but attorneys have argued in court previously about access to details concerning Holmes' mental health. Jury selection is set to begin on Jan. 20 in the trial. The comments by Holmes' parents incensed some survivors of the attack and relatives of those killed. They questioned the timing around the holidays and as 9,000 jury summonses were being delivered for the trial. "To give a person who committed such a calculated, horrific crime a life sentence, to me that's like giving him a slap on the wrist," said Marcus Weaver, who was shot in the arm and whose friend, Rebecca Wingo, died in the attack. Prosecutors, who

are under a gag order, declined to comment, saying it would hurt the fairness and integrity of the trial. His parents, who live in California, say they want to avoid a traumatic trial. One option would be a deal that calls for a guilty plea in exchange for a sentence of life in prison without parole, they said. "If that happened, our son would be in prison the rest of his life, but no one would have to relive those horrible events at a trial the media has permission to televise," the parents wrote. They say the best option would be sending their son to an institution for the mentally ill, which could happen if he is found not guilty by reason of insanity. In addition, they say they have spent every moment since the shooting thinking about the victims and their families and friends. "We are always praying for everyone in Aurora. We wish that July 20, 2012, never happened," they wrote.

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## St. Louis Prosecutor: Some Ferguson witnesses clearly lied

**JIM SALTER**  
**Associated Press**

**ST. LOUIS (AP)** — Some witnesses before the grand jury that investigated the shooting death of 18-year-old Michael Brown obviously lied under oath, a prosecutor said Friday.

St. Louis County Prosecutor Bob McCulloch, who convened the grand jury in August, was interviewed by KTRS Radio in St. Louis. It was his first interview since he announced on Nov. 24 that the grand jury would not indict Ferguson officer Darren Wilson in the shooting of Brown, who was black and unarmed.

"Clearly some were not telling the truth," McCulloch said.

He made reference to one woman who claimed to have seen the shooting. McCulloch said she "clearly wasn't present. She recounted a story right out of the newspaper" that backed up Wilson's version of events, he said. McCulloch did not return messages left with his office by The Associated Press on Friday.

The shooting by a white police officer on Aug. 9 spurred unrest in St. Louis, and the subsequent decision not to indict triggered protests nationwide and debates about race relations and police departments that patrol minority neighborhoods. The demonstrations and discussions were resumed after a New York grand jury decided this month not to indict a white police officer for his role in the chokehold death of a black man.

In the radio interview, McCulloch also defended the decision to make the announcement at night, saying it was best for schools

and allowed business owners time to decide whether to open the next day.

Congresswoman Karla May is pushing for a state investigation of McCulloch, and whether he "manipulated"

the grand jury into the decision.

A joint House and Senate committee is already investigating why Gov. Jay Nixon did not use National Guard troops in Ferguson on Nov.

24. May, a St. Louis Democrat, sent a letter Thursday to committee chairman Sen. Kurt Schaefer, urging that the investigation expand to look at whether McCulloch committed

prosecutorial misconduct. She said in an interview that McCulloch should have removed himself from the case at the outset.

Critics had called for McCulloch to either step aside or for Nixon to appoint a special prosecutor, citing concerns about whether McCulloch could fairly oversee the case. McCulloch's father was a police officer killed in the line of duty by a black assailant in the 1960s.

Ferguson Mayor James Knowles III and others expressed anger that of the hundreds of National Guard troops dispatched to the St. Louis region on Nov. 24, none were in Ferguson as the announcement was made.

No timetable has been set for the legislative committee's investigation, and it wasn't clear if the committee would consider investigating McCulloch. A message left with Schaefer was not immediately returned.



In this August 2014, file photo, police wearing riot gear walk toward a man with his hands raised in Ferguson, Mo. Some witnesses before the grand jury that investigated the shooting death of 18-year-old Michael Brown obviously lied under oath, a prosecutor said Friday.

(AP Photo/Jeff Roberson)

## Driver charged after car crashes into crowd

**TORRANCE, California (AP)** — A woman was charged Friday with five felony counts for allegedly driving into a crowd outside a California church, killing four people including a 6-year-old boy.

Margo Bronstein, 56, is expected to be arraigned later in the day, said Ricardo Santiago with the Los Angeles County district attorney's office. She was charged with four counts of gross vehicular manslaughter and one count of driving under the influence of a drug causing injury.

Five children and eight adults, including the suspect and the driver of an-

other car, suffered injuries such as broken bones, abrasions and head trauma in the crash Wednesday night.

Authorities are investigating what led up to the woman driving through a red light and into nearly a dozen people as they left a church Christmas event. She also hit another vehicle head-on, authorities say. Samuel Gaza, 6, died late Thursday at a hospital, according to Los Angeles County coroner's Lt. David Smith.

Three adults died earlier, including the boy's mother, Martha Gaza, 36; along with Mary Anne Wilson, 81;

and Saeko Matsumura, 87, all of Torrance.

Bronstein was arrested at the scene. Authorities said they believed she had taken prescription drugs but were awaiting the results of a toxicology test.

The pedestrians on Wednesday night had just

attended a student Christmas program at St. James Catholic Church when the motorist sped around the other vehicles in a white Saturn sedan and plowed into the crowd before hitting another car head-on, police Lt. Shawn Freeman said.

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# Cuban cigar boom? Not yet, stores and customers say

**RACHEL LA CORTE**  
**KELLI KENNEDY**  
**Associated Press**

**MIAMI (AP)** — The coveted Cuban cigar is set to make its first legal appearance in the U.S. in years, with relaxed guidelines allowing American travelers to return with a few of the once-forbidden items in their suitcases. But the cigars won't roll into stores just yet, and owners say they aren't worried about any dip in business.

"I don't think they'll be able to afford it. It's not for the average customer," said Erik Otero, who left Cuba when he was 3 and has been rolling cigars since age 11.

Most people won't travel on a regular basis to buy cigars, said Otero, who works at Guantanamera Cigars Co. in Miami's Little Havana. "If anything, it might create a cigar boom because it's going to pique interest again."

Licensed American travelers to Cuba will soon be able to return home with up to \$400 of merchandise, of which \$100 combined



Roberto Ramos, president of the Cubaocho Art and Research Center in Miami's Little Havana neighborhood, lights up a cigar. The Cuban cigar is set to make its first legal appearance in the United States in years, with relaxed guidelines allowing travelers to return with a few of the once-forbidden items in their suitcases. But the cigars won't roll into stores just yet, and owners say they aren't worried about business.

can be spent on alcohol or tobacco products. Experts say that's three to 20 cigars, depending on size, brand and quality.

In Miami, the average customer spends \$5 to \$8 per cigar, Otero said.

Sampson Clay, visiting Miami from Cincinnati on his honeymoon, stopped at the Cuba Tobacco Cigar Co., where an employee hand-wrapped a cigar in front of a packed store.

Clay said flying to Cuba is

(AP Photo/Wilfredo Lee)

too expensive. "I do love my cigars, but I probably wouldn't go down there to get the real thing," he said. Sitting at the bar of Florida Cigar Co. in Fort Lauderdale, Al Schilleci echoed the thoughts of many aficionados: A Cuban is fantastic, but the quality is declining and cigars from Nicaragua are as good or better.

"I've got some Nicaraguans back in the locker here that I would put up against any Cuban any day," Schilleci, 60, said. "I'd go to Cuba for the destination, but cigars wouldn't be the attraction."

President Barack Obama has announced a host of initiatives to strengthen ties with Cuba, but the embargo on the country remains. Cigars brought back to the U.S. must be for personal use, not resale — same as the rules that existed for travelers before August 2004, when the Bush administration imposed strict restrictions those traveling to the island.

The new trade, travel and currency rules will take effect once federal officials revise publish the regulations, which could take weeks.

Even then, travelers bringing back their allotment of

cigars won't affect retailers, said Kip Talley of The International Premium Cigar and Pipe Retail Association, a trade group for tobacconists and suppliers. "If and when Cuban cigars are allowed to be imported, I think there will be a spike in retail tobacco sales," he said. "The curiosity of a new product in the marketplace will drive people out to try those products."

The U.S. cigar market sees about 13 billion cigars sold each year, Talley said. Fewer than 300 million are premium cigars, the hand-made traditional versions. It's those cigars that attract people to Little Havana. Tour buses stop along a street with a half-dozen cigar shops next to a park where men in wide-brimmed hats play dominos.

For novices, the mystique of a Cuban is the biggest lure. Many consider Cuban tobacco the finest in the world because of its climate, fertile soil, proximity to the equator and hand-rolling technique.

But some longtime smokers say it will take time for Cuban cigar-makers to catch up to more sophisticated productions in Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic, where they're grown by "Cuba people with Cuban seed and are very quality controlled," said Joaquin Saladrigas, a sales rep for cigar line Don Pepin Garcia.

Still, some consumers will buy cigars in Cuba, "get back on their yacht and put them in their locker" for bragging rights, said Jay Shapiro of the Cigar Chamber of Commerce. "It's an ego-driven industry," he said.

Some tobacconists say they would welcome further loosening of the rules. Cuban tobacco could be added to blends for even better-tasting cigars, said Eric Newman, co-owner of J.C. Newman Cigar Co. in Tampa.

Newman said much of the hype surrounding Cubans is tied to its prohibition.



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## US Financial Front:

# Unemployment rates fell in 41 US states last month

C. S. RUGABER

AP Economics Writer

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — Unemployment rates fell in 41 U.S. states in November and were unchanged in six more, reflecting healthy job gains across the country.

The Labor Department said Friday that unemployment rates rose in only three states: Connecticut, Louisiana, and Washington state.

Solid economic growth since the spring has encouraged more employers to step up hiring. The U.S. has added nearly 2.7 million jobs this year, the most since 1999. That has lowered unemployment rates in most of the country.

Nationwide, the unemployment rate was 5.8 percent in November, down from 7 percent a year ago. Employers added 321,000 jobs last month, the most in three years.

North Dakota's 2.7 percent unemployment rate was lowest in the nation, while Mississippi's 7.3 percent rate was the highest.

Thirty-seven states reported higher job totals, while 12 lost jobs. Idaho's payrolls were unchanged.

The biggest job gains occurred in California, which added 90,100 jobs in November, followed by Florida, which gained 41,900. Texas added the third-most jobs, with 34,800.

California posted a large increase in a category that includes retail and shipping jobs, likely reflecting some hiring for the holiday shopping season. It also saw big gains in hotels and restaurants and professional and business services, which includes higher-paying jobs such as accountants and architects.

The largest job losses were in West Virginia, which had 5,200 fewer jobs than the previous month. It was followed by Mississippi, which had 4,500 fewer, and Kansas, with 4,100 fewer.

West Virginia lost jobs in construction, professional and business services, and hotels and restaurants.

Overall, unemployment rates are getting closer to healthy levels in most parts of the country. The rate fell below 6 percent in 7 states last month, bringing the total number of states with rates below 6 percent to 29.

Still, much of the decline has occurred because many of the unemployed have stopped looking for work, rather than because they have found jobs. The government doesn't count people as unemployed unless they are actively searching for work.

And there are still 9.1 million Americans officially counted as unemployed, up from 7.6 million before the recession. □



Job seekers attend a job fair in Miami Lakes, Fla. The Labor Department reported on state unemployment rates on Friday, Dec. 19, 2014.

(AP Photo/Alan Diaz)



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## American Living:

# A Socialist in 2016? For Sanders, it's a question worth asking



Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), at an event in Altoona, Iowa. Sanders has been in Iowa laying the groundwork for a possible White House run in 2016, and while few believe he could win the Democratic nomination, he could help shape the debate as a vessel for the anger of the Democratic party's left wing.

(Daniel Acker/The New York Times)

**SHERYL GAY STOLBERG**  
© 2014 New York Times

AMES, Iowa - Sen. Bernie Sanders, an independent from Vermont who calls himself a socialist, was riding in the back seat of a rented blue minivan

this week when his aide abruptly announced they were being pulled over by the Iowa State Police for speeding. "Hi ya, I'm Senator Bernie Sanders, how ya doing?" Sanders piped up, in his

unmistakable Brooklyn accent, after the aide explained to the police officer that they were late for the senator's appearance here.

The officer issued no ticket, just a warning to slow down: "No need making a headline for something silly."

Sanders, though, was in Iowa hoping to make headlines. At 73 and famously gruff, he may be on one of the most quixotic adventures in U.S. politics: In a country that just put Republicans in charge of Congress, he is testing whether Democrats will embrace a socialist for the White House in 2016. He is certainly the only potential candidate to carry a brass key chain from a campaign of Eugene V. Debs, a five-time Socialist Party nominee for president.

He has virtually no chance of winning the nomination, but he does have a chance to shape the debate - presuming he actually runs. With his fiery populist attacks on Wall Street and "the billionaire class," he could become either a nettlesome thorn to Hillary Rodham Clinton or a convenient foil for her, if she runs.

"Sanders could become

the vessel for the anger of the Democratic left," said David Yepsen, a longtime Iowa political reporter who now directs a public policy institute at Southern Illinois University. "Now that Democrats are searching for a nominee, how liberal are they going to be? And the fact that he's a little quirky could almost have some appeal."

Here in Ames, that much was clear at least among the crowd of 250 college students, liberal activists and retirees who packed a church basement to hear Sanders.

Using a milk crate as a podium, he delivered the kind of tirade for which he is well known in Washington. He did not mention his encounter with the police officer.

He railed against big banks ("Break 'em up!"), fretted over climate change and income inequality, and deplored the high cost of a college education ("Totally moronic."). He embraced a single-payer health system ("Guess what everybody! Health care is a right!"), proposed strengthening labor unions and lamented a lack of voter participation ("All over this country people are throwing up their hands in despair.").

But Sanders reserved his greatest ire for what he called "one extreme right-wing billionaire family," the brothers Charles and David Koch. In his view, they are the root of what is wrong in U.S. politics.

"The Koch brothers are worth \$85 billion. You might think that's enough to get by, leave a couple of bucks to your kids," the senator thundered, his voice rising, face reddening. "But apparently they feel an obligation to destroy Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid."

The crowd lapped it up. "We need a debate in the Democratic Party about where we're going," said Sandy Easter, a 65-year-old alternative healer and homeopath who distributed "Run, Bernie, Run" stickers.

"I think he's folksy - the real thing."

But quirky and folksy can take a candidate only so far, and Sanders is hardly without liabilities. For starters, there is the socialist label.

"That's something that Bernie is going to have to overcome," said Democratic strategist Tad Devine, who is advising Sanders. "He is going to have to convince people he is a serious, credible candidate."

Sanders will turn 75 in 2016. After three decades in public office, he cannot exactly market himself as new or fresh, like Barack Obama did in 2008 or Sanders' fellow Vermonter Howard Dean (who has endorsed Clinton) did in 2004.

And Sanders has competition: Liberal groups like MoveOn.org are mounting a campaign to draft a populist with a far larger national following, Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, even though she insists she is not running.

The son of a Polish-born paint salesman who "came to this country without a nickel in his pocket," Sanders grew up listening to his parents fight about money, a fact that he says shaped his political views.

He says wryly that "unlike, historically, most of my colleagues in this institution," the Senate, he does not wake up each morning with visions of the Oval Office.

"I honestly believe anybody who really, really wants to become president is a little bit crazy," he said, "because the problems facing this country and the world are so overwhelming."

He wonders if he is the man who can solve them. So a few months ago, he had a heart-to-heart with Devine, who has advised him in previous races.

Devine said Sanders should not be underestimated; he raised \$8 million for his 2012 election, without a serious opponent, and still has nearly \$4.5 million in the bank. He has enthusiastic followers on Facebook and Twitter.



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## Israeli military says Gaza rocket hits south Israel

DANIEL ESTRIN  
Associated Press

**JERUSALEM (AP)** — A rocket fired from the Gaza Strip struck southern Israel on Friday, the Israeli military said, in the first such attack since September.

The military said air raid sirens were sounded in the Eshkol region bordering the Palestinian coastal territory. The projectile landed in an open field, causing no injuries or damage, according to police. Israel fought a 50-day war this summer with Hamas, the Palestinian militant group that controls Gaza. Hamas launched thousands of rockets and mortars toward Israel, which carried out an aerial campaign and a ground invasion.

The war left more than 2,100 Palestinians dead, according to Palestinian and U.N. officials. On the Israeli side, 66 soldiers and six civilians were killed.

Also Friday, fierce clashes

erupted between Palestinian protesters and Israeli forces at a West Bank military checkpoint and near the village of Turmus Aya, though no injuries were reported.

The village was the site of a Palestinian-Israeli scuffle earlier this month during which Palestinian Cabinet minister Ziad Abu Ain collapsed. He later died en route to hospital. Palestinian and Israeli pathologists subsequently disagreed over the cause of Abu Ain's death. The Palestinian expert said the cause of death was a "blow," while his Israeli colleague said Abu Ain died of a heart attack.

In other developments, the Israeli military on Friday began relaxing travel restrictions for Palestinian Christians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip for the Christmas holiday season, saying it granted 700 permits for Gazans to travel to Israel, the West Bank and Jordan.

Israel said it was also allow-



Israeli border police officers detain a foreign activist following a prayer for Palestinian Cabinet minister Ziad Abu Ain, who collapsed shortly after a protest on Dec. 10 in the West Bank village of Turmus Aya, as they clash with the troops near the village outside of Ramallah, Friday, Dec. 19, 2014. Clashes erupted between Palestinian protesters and Israeli forces at a West Bank military checkpoint near Turmus Aya, where Abu Ain collapsed and later died en route to hospital. Palestinian and Israeli pathologists subsequently disagreed over the cause of Abu Ain's death. The Palestinian expert said the cause of death was a "blow," while his Israeli colleague said Abu Ain died of a heart attack. (AP Photo/Majdi Mohammed)

ing West Bank Christians to travel to Israel, permitting 500 of them to visit their families in the Gaza Strip, subject to security checks.

Israel restricts Palestinians in the two territories from en-

tering the country without special permits, citing security concerns. Travel between the territories is also restricted but those bans are usually relaxed for Christians during the holiday season.

The army also said it would also expand the working hours at military checkpoints to allow pilgrims from around the world faster access to the West Bank city of Bethlehem during Christmas. □

## Iraq clashes with IS delay evacuation of the Yazidis

SAMEER N. YACCOUB  
Associated Press

**BAGHDAD (AP)** — Sporadic clashes between Iraqi Kurdish fighters and Islamic State extremists, as well as other logistics problems, are delaying the evacuation of the last Yazidis still trapped on Mt. Sinjar, an Iraqi lawmaker said Friday. Fighting was still underway near the mountain, said Mahma Khalil, himself a member of Iraq's minority Yazidis. He said the need to plan and prepare for logistics and transportation contributed to the delay. However, Khalil said Iraqi Kurdish peshmerga fighters were able to ease the plight of the thousands of Yazidis still trapped on Mt. Sinjar and delivered food and supplies to them.

It followed the peshmerga's advances on Thursday, when they managed to retake some ground lost last summer to Islamic State militants and opened up a corridor to the mountain.

The development was an incremental step in the battle to retake the town of Sinjar, at the foothills of the mountain by the same name, which fell to the Islamic State group in early August.

The Kurdish peshmerga troops, backed by U.S.-led coalition airstrikes, launched the operation to retake Sinjar on Wednesday.

"The situation of these trapped people is better now, with the fresh supplies and we hope to evacuate them as soon as possible," Khalil told The Associated Press. In Syria, Nawaf Khalil, a spokesman for the powerful Kurdish Democratic Union Party, said that Syrian Kurds militiamen also were able to open up another corridor between their region of northeastern Syria and Mt. Sinjar in neighboring Iraq. The Syrian Kurdish fighters also captured nine villages from IS militants, he said. □

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# China arrests US aid worker in North Korean town

**BEIJING (AP)** — A Korean-American aid worker working in a Chinese city near North Korea has been arrested on charges of embezzlement and possession of fake invoices, his lawyer said Friday, in a sign that authorities are increasingly sensitive about activities by foreigners in the border region. Shanghai-based lawyer Zhang Peihong said he

was notified by prosecutors in China's northeastern Yanbian prefecture of the arrest of Peter Hahn, a 74-year-old Christian who ran a vocational school for Chinese and Korean youth for more than a decade in the border town of Tumen. The charges appear to be an excuse to incriminate the man, who also had provided food to North Korean children, Zhang said.

It was unclear whether Hahn was targeted because of his religious beliefs, although his aid work was inspired by his Christian faith, Zhang said. "I am not optimistic about the case's prospects now that he has been arrested," the lawyer said. "The charges clearly have no merit." No trial date has been set, Zhang said. In Washington, State De-

partment spokeswoman Jen Psaki confirmed Hahn's arrest. She said a U.S. consular officer visited Hahn in jail on Friday, and the U.S. consulate in Shenyang is providing all possible consular assistance. She referred reporters to Chinese authorities for any additional information. China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not respond Friday to requests for com-

ment. Earlier this year, authorities detained a Canadian Christian couple, Kevin and Julia Garratt, who had lived in Dandong, another Chinese town bordering North Korea, for suspected theft of military and intelligence information. Their current status is unclear. Hahn was born in North Korea but is a naturalized U.S. citizen. □

# Russia seeks ten years in prison for Putin foe

**NATALIYA VASILYEVA**  
**Associated Press**  
**MOSCOW (AP)** — Russian prosecutors on Friday asked a court to sentence President Vladimir Putin's chief foe to 10 years in prison, but the defiant opposition leader vowed to keep up his fight against the Kremlin regime. Alexei Navalny, 38, rose to prominence with his investigations of official corruption and played a leading role in organizing massive anti-Putin street protests in 2011 and 2012. But within a month of the government's May 2012 crackdown on the opposition, investigators slapped Navalny with several criminal cases. In a trial last summer, Navalny was found guilty of embezzlement and sentenced to prison, but he was released the next day after thousands of people protested in the streets of Moscow. He was given a suspended sentence instead. In their closing arguments in a separate trial in a Moscow courthouse, pros-

ecutors asked a judge on Friday to convict Navalny and imprison him for nine years, with an additional

ing a French cosmetics company. The company, Yves Rocher, wrote a complaint

ecutive who wrote the complaint also left Russia shortly afterward and never attended the hearings.

vantageous contracts" and defrauded them of 26 million rubles (currently worth about \$440,000). Alexei Navalny's attorney, Olga Mikhailova, argued that "no evidence has been presented in court, in either of the episodes, that the crime even took place." Oleg Navalny said the indictment contains conflicting statements, including the dates of the alleged fraud and laundry of its proceeds. He also said the prosecutors never said where money that allegedly had been stolen could have gone. Alexei Navalny, a lawyer and popular blogger, came in a strong second in Moscow's mayoral election in September 2013, nearly clinching a run-off with a Kremlin heavy-weight. In Friday's court hearing, he rejected the charges against him as a payoff for his investigations of official corruption, and he dismissed them as "nonsense from the first to the last word." □



**Russian opposition activist and anti-corruption crusader Alexei Navalny, right, and his brother Oleg wait for a start of a trial against them in a courtroom in Moscow, Russia, Friday, Dec. 19, 2014. Navalny, who has been under house arrest since February, is being charged in a second trial that may put him behind bars for good. (AP Photo/Pavel Golovkin)**

year added because of the prior conviction. Navalny and his brother Oleg are being prosecuted for allegedly defraud-

to investigators, but its representatives have insisted throughout the trial that there never were any damages. The French ex-

The prosecutors, who demanded eight years in prison for Oleg Navalny, insisted that the brothers forced the company "into disad-

# 8 Australian children killed in reported stabbing

**MICHELLE INNIS**  
**© 2014 New York Times**  
**SYDNEY** - Eight children were found dead Friday in a single house in a suburb of Cairns, Australia, and the state police in Queensland were investigating. Officers were called around 11:20 a.m. to a house in the suburb, Manooora, where they found the bodies of the children, ranging in age from about

18 months to 15 years, along with a seriously injured 34-year-old woman. She is believed to be the mother of seven of the eight children, and she was taken to a hospital where she was treated for stab wounds. Local news reports said at least some of the children had been stabbed. A spokesman at the state police headquarters who

spoke on the condition of anonymity said it would take days for investigators to determine the cause of the children's deaths. He said 12 specialist police investigators had been sent to Cairns, in Queensland's far north, from the state's capital, Brisbane, to help. "Forensic teams are at the house, and it will then take investigators some days to work through the crime

scene and determine the cause of death," he said. Earlier, Detective Inspector Bruno Asnicar told reporters at the scene, "This is a tragic, tragic event." He said the woman was in stable condition and was helping the police with their investigation. She had not been charged. A police spokesman said no further details were available.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott described the news as heartbreaking. "All parents would feel a gut-wrenching sadness at what has happened," he said in a statement. "These are trying days for our country." On Monday, an armed man held 17 hostages in a Sydney cafe. The man and two of his captives were killed. □





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## South Korea disbands party sympathetic to North Korea

CHOE SANG-HUN  
© 2014 New York Times

In the first verdict of its kind, the Constitutional Court of South Korea on Friday ordered the dissolution of a small leftist party accused of supporting North Korea at the cost of the South's national security and in violation of its constitution.

The court also ordered all of the party's five lawmakers stripped of their parliamentary seats.

The 3-year-old United Progressive Party "aimed at using violent means to overthrow our free democratic system" and "ultimately establishing a North Korean-style socialist system," the nine-member court said in its nationally televised ruling.

The ruling marked a political victory for President Park Geun-hye and her National Intelligence Service and Justice Ministry, which filed a lawsuit in November 2013 asking the court to disband the party. The party's estimated 100,000 members have been among Park's most vocal critics, often calling her a reincarnation of her father, military dictator Park Chung-hee, who ruled the country from 1961 to 1979.

With only five seats, the party is a minor force in the 300-member National Assembly. But the move to dissolve it incited an intensely watched yearlong legal battle over the limits to the freedom of political activities in South Korea.

No political party in democratized South Korea had been shut down by the government or a court decision since Syngman Rhee, South Korea's dictatorial founding president, forced the closure of a leftist party in 1958. By law, the Constitutional Court can disband a political party if six or more of its nine justices agree that the party "violated the basic democratic order." In its ruling Friday, the court said that all but one of its justices agreed on the party's dissolution.

The verdict took effect immediately. By law, the party's assets will be confiscated by the government. The country's national election commission said that elections would take place in April to fill the seats vacated by Friday's ruling.

Park's office had no immediate comment.

Outside the courthouse, conservative activists cheered the news, waving national flags. Park Dae-chool, a spokesman for Park's governing Saenuri Party, hailed the verdict as "a stern judgment against those who deny the Republic of Korea." The Republic of Korea is the official name of South Korea.

"Today is the day when democracy in South Korea is pronounced dead," Lee Jung-hee, head of the United Progressive Party, said during a rally of party members outside the courthouse. Lee accused the Constitutional Court of "opening the door for totalitarianism." Some party members wept.

The main opposition party, the New Politics Alliance for Democracy, issued a statement saying that although it opposed the United Progressive Party's policies, it also opposed the fate of a political party being decided by a court ruling. □



Supporters of Pakistan's political party Muttahida Qaumi Movement express solidarity with families of the students killed in Tuesday's Taliban attack on a military-run school in Peshawar, as they rally in Karachi, Pakistan, Friday, Dec. 19, 2014. Pakistani warplanes and ground forces killed at least 77 militants in a northwestern tribal region near the Afghan border, officials said Friday, days after Taliban fighters killed 148 people - most of them children - in a school massacre. (AP Photo/Fareed Khan)

## Dozens of militants killed in Pakistan in wake of barbaric school attack

ISMAIL KHAN  
© 2014 New York Times

**PESHAWAR, Pakistan** - Military action against the Pakistani Taliban intensified on both sides of the border with Afghanistan on Friday, officials said, in a reflection of hardening resolve to fight the group after it carried out the school massacre in Peshawar this week.

In Pakistan, the military said it killed 62 militants in airstrikes and clashes near the border, mostly in the Khyber agency, a tribal area, on Thursday and Friday. The fighting was an indication that the Taliban's operations have continued to spread out in response to the continuing military operation in the nearby North Waziristan region, which had long been the most concentrated center of militant power in Pakistan.

In the eastern Afghan province of Nangarhar, the international military coalition

carried out airstrikes that killed at least five militants. A Western official briefed on the strikes, but speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence matters, said that the operation was directly targeting elements of the Pakistani Taliban that were thought to have aided in the Peshawar school killings.

After the school attack, senior Afghan and Pakistani officials reaffirmed their commitment to work together against the Pakistani Taliban on both sides of the border. Militant hide-outs in the rugged and remote Pashtun tribal areas that span both countries have long been a point of tension, with Afghanistan and Pakistan each accusing the other of sheltering militant proxies. The massacre in Peshawar has prompted an outpouring of grief in Pakistan, along with calls for tougher action against militants.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif visited the headquarters of the Pakistani army in Rawalpindi on Friday for a briefing on the security situation.

Just two days after the prime minister reinstated the death penalty in Pakistan, the government announced its first two executions in years. Two men identified as senior militants were hanged at the prison in the city of Faisalabad, the officials said, even as human rights advocates expressed concerns about potential legal abuses in the name of counterterrorism efforts.

Pakistani officials also reported the arrest of at least four people in Punjab province in connection with the school attacks, although few details were given about their possible roles. DawnNews reported that the suspects were connected to at least one of the cellphone SIM cards used by the gunmen during the attack. □



## Hope and some fear in Cuba amid thaw with US

PETER ORSI  
ANDREA RODRIGUEZ  
Associated Press

**HAVANA (AP)** — The restoration of diplomatic ties between Cuba and the United States has unleashed expectations of even more momentous changes on an island that often seems frozen in a past of classic cars and crumbling Art Deco buildings.

On the first full day after the surprise announcement, many Cubans expressed hope Thursday that it will mean greater access to jobs and the creature comforts taken for granted elsewhere, and lift a struggling socialist economy where staples like meat, cooking oil and toilet paper are often hard to come by.

That yearning, however, was tempered with anxiety. Some fear a cultural onslaught, or that crime and drugs, both rare in Cuba, will become common along with visitors from the United States. There is also concern that the country will become just another Caribbean destination.

"There are things that shouldn't get lost, that have gone very well here even though Cubans complain," said Nayda Martinez, a 52-year-old chemical engineer in Havana.

"I don't want the system, the country or the regime, whatever you want to call it, to change," Martinez said. "What the people want is to live better."

That mix of optimism and con-

cern was a common refrain Thursday among Cubans trying to digest the implications of such a seismic shift between the two Cold War rivals after more than half a century of bad blood.

Trade with the U.S. will help the country develop, said 55-year-old homemaker Maria Betancourt, but she wor-



**A man sells tomatoes to a customer on a street of Old Havana in Havana, Cuba. The restoration of diplomatic ties between Cuba and the United States has unleashed expectations of even more momentous changes on an island that often seems frozen in a past of classic cars and crumbling Art Deco buildings. (AP Photo/Ramon Espinosa)**

ried it would bring another kind of isolation.

"I wouldn't want to lose that uniquely Cuban solidarity, or for this to become a more consumerist or individualist society," she said.

Cuba is a place of contrasts. It matches the most developed nations in education and health indicators such as infant mortality. It has one of the lowest crime rates in the Western Hemisphere and some of the best-preserved habitat in the Caribbean, in

part because of the lack of development.

But the majority of islanders still work government jobs that pay just \$20 a month on average. Internet access is scarce, slow and expensive. Nearly all media is controlled by the state. The Communist Party is the only sanctioned political party, and that is not

open to debate. Complaining about a pothole on your street is OK, but openly protesting the government can still land you in jail. Cubans have learned to navigate their heavy handed political system and figured out how to survive amid the scarcity, long lines and a chronic housing crunch that forces families to pack three generations or more under one roof. Many are eager for change, but no one yet knows what the diplomatic opening will bring.

"Life here is so tough that if it keeps getting worse, there will be even more problems," said Jose Marcos, a 35-year-old shop employee.

While people cheered Wednesday when they learned that three Cuban agents held in the United States had been sent home as part of a deal that also released American Alan Gross after five years in prison, Havana was quiet on Thursday. Cubans went about their daily routines, with bicycle taxi drivers pedaling the streets looking for fares and fruit vendors calling out to passers-by. There was no immediate word of plans for any official celebration like the welcome home party in 2000 for Elian Gonzalez after a yearlong custody battle in Miami.

Journalists from around the world were hurrying to get into Cuba, hoping to secure accreditation from a government that decides who is allowed to report from a country that many believe is at a turning point.

In announcing that the U.S. and Cuba would resume diplomatic relations for the first time since 1961, President Barack Obama said he still has concerns about human rights, democracy and freedom of expression on the island. President Raul Castro said he still wants an end to the trade embargo that has choked off commerce to the island and has kept generations of Americans from being able to visit. □

## Brazil to study legalization of medical weed

RENATA BRITO  
Associated Press

**RIO DE JANEIRO (AP)** — Brazil will soon look into the possibility of legalizing the use of a marijuana derivative to treat people suffering from severe seizures. ANVISA, the country's Health Surveillance Agency says in a statement posted on its website that the "re-classification" of marijuana derivative cannabidiol, which is banned in Brazil, will be discussed starting next month.

The statement came Friday, one day after some 40 people protested in Brasilia to demand the legalization of cannabidiol.

Some people resort to a clandestine network of illegal marijuana growers in Rio de Janeiro state that extract cannabidiol and donate it. It is that network that supplies Margarete de Brito with the cannabidiol she gives her 5 year-old daughter Sofia, who was born with a genetic mutation that causes seizures.

"They won't even let you pay the shipping" she said. Brito said that since starting treatment with the substance over a year ago her daughter's seizures have decreased dramatically and she stopped taking another medication that left her drowsy.

Earlier this month, the Federal Medical Council that regulates the medical profession in Brazil authorized neurologists and psychiatrists to prescribe cannabidiol to treat epileptic children and teenagers who do not respond to conventional treatment.

Bruto, a lawyer and a director of the association that represents medical marijuana users, praised the council's decision but said it should have recommended the national production and medical use of cannabidiol and other marijuana-based substances.

Nelson Nahon, the vice president of the Rio de Janeiro State Medical Council, said there is not enough research or information on cannabidiol in Brazil to guarantee its safety and effectiveness. □

## No word yet from Fidel on historic US-Cuba shift

ANNE GARCIA  
Associated Press

**HAVANA (AP)** — Everyone in Cuba is talking about the abrupt turn in relations with the United States, with one notable exception: Fidel Castro.

The larger-than-life retired leader of Cuba so far has made no public comment about the announcement that the U.S. will restore diplomatic relations after more than 50 years of hostility. His brother, President Raul Castro, broke the news to the nation in a TV address and may appear again at the Cuban National Assembly, which started one

of its twice-annual sessions on Friday. For years after he left office in 2006 due to illness, Fidel Castro penned editorials that dutifully were printed in all official media and read verbatim on state TV newscasts. Last year, he said he also was retiring as a columnist, but has since published occasional opinion pieces to comment on world events. The elder Castro rarely appears in public these days. He last was seen on Jan. 8 when he attended an art exhibition in Havana. In August, Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro said he met with him and showed

photos of their encounter. His last written commentary, about Cuba's efforts to fight Ebola, was in October. It's not entirely unusual that Castro, 88, has yet to weigh in on this week's news. He waited six days before commenting last year on the death Hugo Chavez, the Venezuelan president who was a close friend and ally.

Little information about Castro is officially disclosed, including where he lives. But as before, his silence causes many to wonder.

"I think that Fidel is a little bit older and his activities are very limited, that's for

certain," said Maria Teresa Ojito, a 66-year-old language teacher.

But, she said, "I'm not very worried because Raul is the one who's running the country. ... Really, the one who has to make decisions these days and enter into dialogue is Raul, not Fidel." Pedro Pablo Rodriguez who, like Castro, is retired, also points to his age. "He's older and he's likely very excited about these things," the 80-year-old said. "Possibly, we just have to wait until he recovers, but I'm sure he will be fine because he's a strong man." □





## Aruba Marriott Presents 2nd Vloggers Film Festival

**PALM BEACH** - Aruba Marriott together with Diamond PR recently organized the "Partners in Paradise" press trip featuring the 2nd edition of the Vloggers Film Festival. Four video bloggers together with 4 journalists were paired up in teams of two and were invited by the Aruba Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino and Diamond PR to capture the essence of the destination of Aruba and the resort on video. The groups received the assignment to film and edit the content in three days and present it at the Vloggers Film Festival on day four. With a similar background of travelling worldwide and telling their stories through writing and videos, the groups used their own personalities to create unique videos showcasing the splendor of the island, friendliness of the locals, the resort experience and uniqueness of the one happy island. The Vloggers Film Festival took place at the H2Oasis Adult Pool at the Aruba Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino, where the videos were individually presented to the public. A judge's panel of four was invited to choose the best video based on the criteria: creativity, uniqueness, showcase the resort and create curiosity for others. The panel consisted of Tom Calame - GM of the Aruba Marriott, Carolina Voulleme - Director of Sales & Marketing at the Aruba Marriott, Rona Coster - Managing Director and Publisher of Marketing Plus and Jim Hepple - CEO of AHATA. In addition, the public was also able to vote to choose the Viewer's Choice Award. Congratulations went to the group of Perrie Hartz and Ashley Colburn who were named the Judges



Panel Award winner and Juliana Broste and Pamela Jacobs who were named the Viewer's Choice favorite. Congratulations also went to the groups of Angelica Olstad & Gloria Powell and Shayne Ben-

owitz & Peter Bragiel who presented amazing videos. The videos can be viewed on the Aruba Marriott's YouTube channel and Facebook page. Each partner of the video that gets the most views be-



tween now and January 5th, will have a three-night stay to award to one of their followers. The Aruba Marriott would like to thank their partners ATA (Aruba Tourism Authority), De Palm Tours, Red Sail Sports, Vela Aruba, West Deck and all other supporters for their cooperation. □





## The Island of Aruba Receives an Award from Site

Wichita Villacres enjoyed the distinct honor of collecting a plaque on behalf of the island of Aruba. The recognition handed out by SITE Florida & Caribbean chapter was awarded to the island for the excellent support given to the Site Florida & Caribbean chapter, in the past three year. The presentation took place December 9th in Miami, at Turnberry Isle.

The island of Aruba did an excellent job sponsoring the entertainment during Site's Crystal Award lunch in Rotterdam, during the Site Global Conference in November 2014, with native musician Michael Lampe, and his Datapanik band, brought in especially from Aruba to entertain delegates. Datapanik is made up of young Aruban musicians who showcase



Aruba's cultural-musical heritage with a modern and authentic twist. On a recent official visit to the island of Aruba the Dutch royal couple King Willem-Alexander and Queen Maxima of the Netherlands enjoyed an especially staged, under the

stars concert of Datapanik at Bushiribana, the island's historical Gold Mine ruins. The program played by the band at the Crystal Award lunch included an opening and closing set, which were both well received by conference attendees, who loved the sound and

results, possible. Because SITE serves as the source of expertise, knowledge and professional connections, the delegates' exposure to Aruban culture and music will surely result in increased interest in the island and the future, desired, return on investment.

Aruba enjoys a long term relationship with the SITE conference, having sponsored various other SITE events before with an eye on the Incentive Travel Market via close collabo-



danced to these old/new tunes right through lunch. A talented, young dance group performed together with Datapanik, lead by a local talent based in the Netherlands, Aneudi Cabral. Aneudi prepared the choreography and special costumes for this festive occasion, enjoyed by all.

The Aruba delegation to the Site Global Conference included Jerusha Rasmijn, Darysse Croes, Elston Peterson, ATA, Wichita Villacres, ECO DMS, Kelsey Gernert, ECO DMS and Maoreen Every, ECO DMS.

SITE's Crystal Awards Recognition Program started in 1980. It provides industry acclaim for world-class organizations that excel in the design of unique, memorable experiences that deliver measurable benefits for their clients through the use of unique group travel experiences. Today, the SITE Crystal Award serves as a benchmark for programs and is regarded as the highest honor in the motivational events and incentive travel industry.

According to Jerusha Rasmijn, ACB Conferences & Events Manager, participation in the SITE Global Conference 2014 in Rotterdam made a valuable connection between motivational experiences and business

ration with the association for Incentive Travel Professionals. The island also hosted a stand during coffee breaks where delegates had an opportunity to acquire more information about the island as a MICE destination. Additionally, Aruba is sponsoring an Aruban student, majoring in Event Organization, allowing him to attend the SITE global conference. Attendance of the conference will give the student additional knowledge of the industry and a memorable personal experience, required to sustain his professional growth.

SITE, is first of all a network of incentive and meeting professionals. Site members are part of an international community, benefiting from great networking which facilitates the challenge of finding business opportunities, exchanging information and knowledge with other business partners. SITE is an important partner of the Aruba tourism industry wishing to claim its share in the MICE, Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions industry.

Wichita Villacres, President, ECO Destination Management Services of Aruba & Curaçao, is the President of the 2014 SITE Florida and Caribbean chapter 2014.



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## Special Guests Honored at the Divi Phoenix Resort

**PALM BEACH** - Recently the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure of honoring a very nice group of families whom are loyal and friendly visitors of Aruba at the Divi Phoenix Beach Resort, as Distinguished Visitors and Ambassadors of Goodwill! The symbolic honorary titles are presented in the name of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation to guests who visit Aruba for 10-to-19 and 20-or-more consecutive years. The



honorees included Nancy and Denny Joseph, Nellie Rivera and Altagracia Pacheco as Distinguished Vis-

itors, and Daryl Collier and Len Gordon as Ambassadors of Goodwill.

Mr. Ricardo Croes representing Aruba Tourism Authority conducted the ceremony at the Divi Phoenix Beach Resort, along with Ms. Avril from the Activities Department.

All of the guests are loyal members of the Divi Phoenix Beach Resort, and they love Aruba very much because of the great extremely friendly people, the weather, the beaches, the restaurants and the safety of the island.







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guests who visit Aruba for 20-or-more consecutive years. The honorees are Mr. Stanley and Mrs. Bernice Oak, honored for 26 years, and Mr. Paul Most, honored for 25 years. All the honorees are loyal members of the Casa del Mar Beach Resort and they love Aruba very much

because the people are like family to them and Casa del Mar is their home away from home. The certificates were presented by Ms. Darline S. de Cuba representing Aruba Tourism Authority together with Mr. Bob Curtis General Manager and Mr. Tony Powers Chief Engineer at Casa Del Mar. □







Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps walks into a courthouse for a trial on drunken driving and other charges, Friday, Dec. 19, 2014, in Baltimore.

Associated Press

## Michael Phelps pleads guilty to drunken driving

JULIET LINDERMAN  
Associated Press

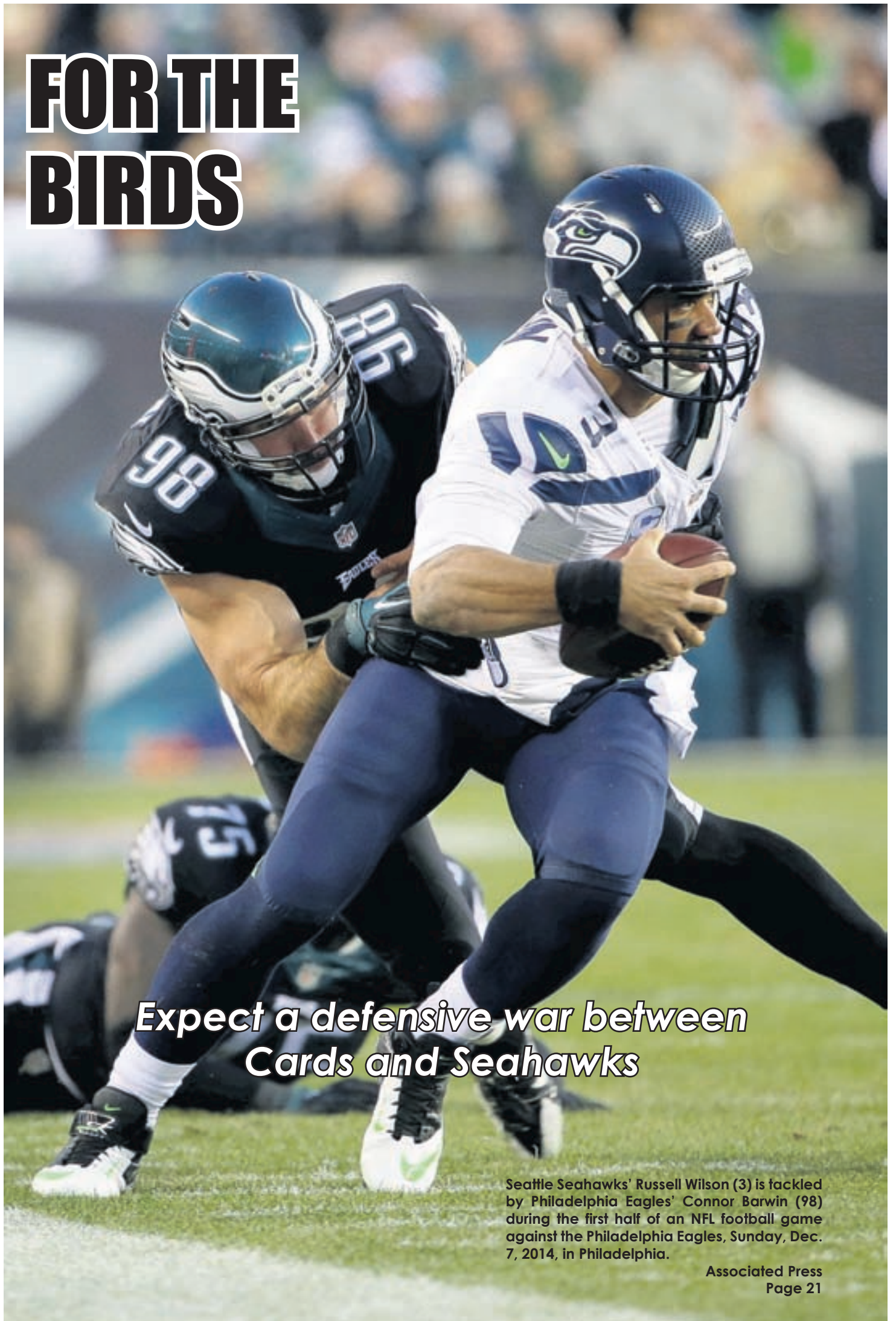
**BALTIMORE (AP)** — Olympic gold medal swimmer Michael Phelps pleaded guilty to drunken driving on Friday, almost three months after he was arrested after leaving a Baltimore casino. Phelps, 29, was arrested Sept. 30. Documents show he was stopped for speeding and crossing the double yellow line while driving a tunnel. Police say Phelps registered a .14 percent on a blood-alcohol test. The legal limit is .08 percent in Maryland.

He was sentenced to a year in prison, but the prison sentence is suspended. He must be on probation for a year and a half.

Phelps arrived at the courthouse in a green Mercedes with his attorney and sat with his mother and sisters in the courtroom, wearing a suit and tie. His attorney said Phelps began a treatment program immediately after his arrest, including 45 days of inpatient treatment.

Continued on Page 19

## FOR THE BIRDS



## Expect a defensive war between Cards and Seahawks

Seattle Seahawks' Russell Wilson (3) is tackled by Philadelphia Eagles' Connor Barwin (98) during the first half of an NFL football game against the Philadelphia Eagles, Sunday, Dec. 7, 2014, in Philadelphia.

Associated Press  
Page 21



# Marathon runner Jeptoo's 'B' sample positive

**TOM ODULA**

**Associated Press**

**NAIROBI, Kenya (AP)** — Marathon runner Rita Jeptoo's "B" sample tested positive, Kenya's athletics federation said Friday, confirming an earlier test that found traces of a banned performance enhancer. Jeptoo is a three-time winner of the Boston Marathon and two-time winner in Chicago. She is one of the highest profile Kenyan athletes to fail a doping test. Tests of the "B" sample were conducted between Wednesday and Friday at the World Anti-Doping Agency lab in Lausanne, Athletics Kenya said. The federation said in a statement that it will hold a hearing of Jeptoo's case early January. David Okeyo and Jackson Tuwei, who are vice presidents of Athletics Kenya, had said in November that Jeptoo's "A" sample



In this Monday, April 17 2006 file photo, Rita Jeptoo of Kenya breaks the tape in Boston to win the women's division of the 110th running of the Boston Marathon.

**Associated Press**

taken in an out-of-competition test in Kenya on Sept. 25 showed traces of the blood-booster EPO. The 33-year-old Jeptoo claimed her second straight title in Chicago on Oct. 12. She was set to be crowned winner of the World Marathon Majors series before it was revealed that she had failed a doping test. Earlier Friday the head of Kenya's athletics federation had said the doping problem in his country is far less severe than in Russia or China. Athletics Kenya President Isaiah Kiplagat said the federation has banned or suspended 32 athletes for doping in the past five years. "If you compare that to athletes banned by other federations like Russia and China, we are nowhere," he said. Athletics Kenya has done

all it could to "arrest" the doping problem, Kiplagat said. Kiplagat's comments came as the World Anti-Doping Agency investigates allegations of systematic doping in Russia. Germany's ARD network alleged a web of doping, corruption and cover-ups in Russian athletics that implicated government-backed agencies. Kiplagat said a Kenyan government taskforce will formulate laws to punish anyone found guilty of supplying Kenyan athletes with performance-enhancing drugs. In 2012, ARD alleged there was widespread doping among Kenya's outstanding distance runners, saying the blood-boosting drug EPO and other prohibited substances were easily available from pharmacies in its high-altitude training camps.

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Continued from Page 17

## Michael Phelps

A letter from his doctor there was glowing, saying he was forthright and co-operative.

Phelps also is attending Alcoholics Anonymous and is continuing with therapy in Maryland.

"I now have the tools to move past this. What I did was wrong, and I made a bad mistake. I'm looking forward to having a much brighter future than I had in the past," Phelps told the judge.

Judge Nathan Braverman told Phelps that success overcoming alcohol would not come overnight, and warned him of the consequences of another slip-up. "You don't need a lecture from the court," Braverman said. "If you haven't gotten the message by now, or forget the message, the only option is jail."

It was not Phelps' first brush with the law, or with drinking and driving. His first DUI arrest came in 2004 when he

was 19. He was sentenced to probation and required to talk to high school students about alcohol awareness. Phelps pleaded guilty to the charges, but as a young first-time offender he avoided conviction.

"I recognize the seriousness of this mistake," he said at the time. "I've learned from this mistake and will continue learning from this mistake for the rest of my life." Another embarrassment for Phelps came in 2009, when a British tabloid newspaper published a photo of him using a marijuana pipe at a party. Afterward, Phelps was suspended from USA swimming for three months and one of his major sponsors, Kellogg Co., dropped him.

Before the latest arrest, Phelps came out of retirement with his sights set on competing at a fifth Olympics in Rio. The plea is not expected to have any im-

pact on those plans.

He has returned to training and a six-month suspension imposed by USA Swimming ends on March 6, allowing him to swim the final three events on the U.S. Grand Prix schedule. Phelps might also seek to add some international meets to beef up his 2015 schedule, since he is also banned from swimming in next summer's world championships in Russia.

"We're looking at a lot of different options for competition," his coach, Bob Bowman, told The Associated Press in a recent interview.

"We're just taking it one day at a time. He's back in training, and we're seeing how things go. We'll look at things in March and really go from there."

Phelps retired after the 2012 London Olympics but changed his mind a year later. Bowman said the swimmer was in much bet-



Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps speaks with reporters after he walked out of a courthouse where he pleaded guilty to drunken driving, Friday, Dec. 19, 2014, in Baltimore.

Associated Press

ter shape, even after his DUI arrest and taking time off, than he was during his initial return to the pool. Phelps won three golds and two silvers at one

of the biggest meets of the 2014, the Pan Pacific Championships in August. He was named the male athlete of the year by USA Swimming. □



# Padres, Dodgers finalize Kemp trade

**BERNIE WILSON**  
**AP Sports Writer**

**SAN DIEGO (AP)** — Slugger Matt Kemp has joined the Padres after San Diego and the Los Angeles Dodgers finalized a five-player trade Thursday. The teams agreed to the trade last week during the winter meetings in San Diego. It was the first of three big deals by new Padres general manager A.J. Preller, who also has added outfielder Wil Myers, the 2013 AL Rookie of the Year, from Tampa Bay and All-Star catcher Derek Norris from Oakland. The Padres, desperate to pump up the worst offense in the majors, also get \$32 million from the Dodgers to help offset the \$107 million remaining on Kemp's contract. The Padres' obligation of \$75 million to Kemp over five years becomes the biggest deal in club history.

Kemp twice made the All-Star team during his time in L.A., as well as winning two Gold Glove and two Silver Slugger awards. His 182 homers rank fourth in Los Angeles Dodgers history. San Diego also gets catcher Tim Federowicz. The Dodgers receive catcher Yasmani Grandal and pitchers Joe Wieland and Zach Eflin. Padres President Mike Dee declined to comment on reports that the team was concerned with certain aspects of Kemp's physical. "We had a player that had some prior injuries and we wanted to make sure we did a full exam," Dee told The Associated Press. "A.J. and his team did their due diligence, conferred with our medical team and ultimately were comfortable moving forward." Kemp has had shoulder and ankle operations in



This July 21, 2014, file photo shows Los Angeles Dodgers' Matt Kemp in the dugout before a baseball game against the Pittsburgh Pirates in Pittsburgh. Associated Press

recent years. Last May, he was groomed to play left field because the Dodgers weren't confident he could handle the defensive demands of playing

center field after ankle surgery. Grandal, 26, led the Padres with 15 homers last season while hitting .225. He was suspended for the

first 50 games of 2013 after testing positive for testosterone and then injured a knee in a collision at the plate that July. He's also played first base. □

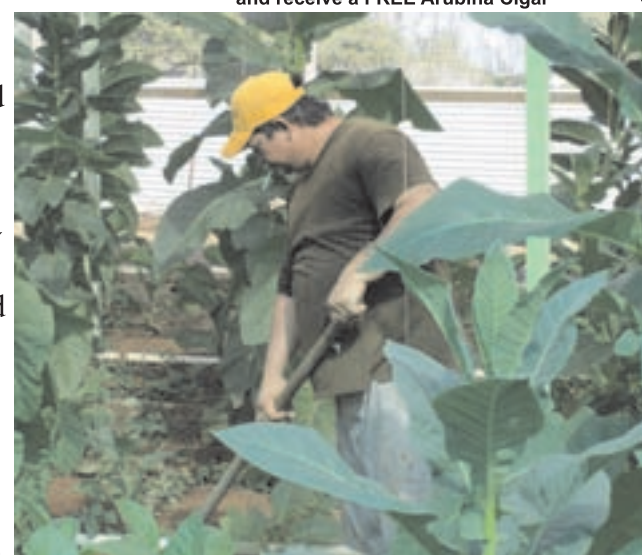
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## NFL Preview

## Surging Seahawks face wounded Cardinals

## The Associated Press

The Seattle Seahawks fly into Arizona on a four-game winning streak, looking very much like the Super Bowl championship team of a season ago.

The Arizona Cardinals, already assured of a playoff berth, send a quarterback who wasn't around a month ago against a fierce Seattle defense ranked No. 1, that has given up a combined 27 points in its last four games.

The Sunday night matchup has huge postseason implications.

The Seahawks, 10-4, can close in on another NFC West title with a victory. The Cardinals, at 11-3, can clinch the NFC's No. 1 seed and home-field advantage throughout the playoffs, including the Super Bowl should they get there. Seattle loses and there's a chance, however slight, that the Seahawks don't even make the playoffs. Arizona loses and the Cardinals probably are a wildcard team.

Already in are AFC division winners Denver (West),

New England (East) and Indianapolis (South).

There are plenty of doubters about Arizona, even though the Cardinals have the NFC's best record. Don't count the Seahawks among them.

"They don't just win games by luck," Seattle linebacker Bobby Wagner said. "But we feel like we're on a roll and we're going to keep that roll going."

With Arizona's quarterback issues, Seattle is an eight-point favorite on the road. Arizona has persevered through a litany of injuries, most recently to Drew Stanton, who took over at quarterback when Carson Palmer went down to a season-ending knee injury. With Stanton out with a sprained right knee, coach Bruce Arians has turned to Ryan Lindley, signed from the San Diego practice squad after Palmer was hurt.

Seattle defensive end Michael Bennett doesn't know much about Lindley: "Just that he's a quarterback, and one of my favorite meals is quarterback,"



Arizona Cardinals wide receiver Jaron Brown (13) flips after being hit by St. Louis Rams' E.J. Gaines during the first half of an NFL football game Thursday, Dec. 11, 2014 in St. Louis.

Associated Press

Bennett said.

Lindley, in his third NFL season, was Arizona's No. 3 quarterback last season and didn't play. He holds the dubious record of most

pass attempts (182) without a touchdown in NFL history.

"But everybody else is their starters," Seattle defensive end Cliff Avril said. "They

still have the same O-line ... they still have all their guys, they still have Larry (Fitzgerald). Anybody could throw to him and he'll catch it."

When the teams met in Seattle a month ago, and the Seahawks won 19-3, Arizona held Marshawn Lynch to 39 yards rushing and sacked Russell Wilson seven times. But Wilson slipped away from the pass rush for some big plays, too. The Seattle quarterback rushed for 73 yards, 40 on one play in the drive for the Seahawks' lone touchdown.

Elsewhere, the Dallas Cowboys will take the NFC East with a win over the visiting Colts, and a variety of other wins and losses. DeMarco Murray, wearing padding for a broken bone in his left hand, needs 87 yards to break NFL rushing leader Emmitt Smith's franchise record of 1,773.

The Cincinnati Bengals take the AFC North with a victory over visiting Denver, and losses by Pittsburgh and Baltimore, making that midseason tie with Carolina helpful. □

## NFL Roundup

## Jaguars hold off Titans late, win 21-13 in home finale

## JACKSONVILLE, Florida (AP)

— In a match that was widely billed as unwatchable, Jacksonville provided most of the highlights in a 21-13 win over Tennessee in Thursday's game between two NFL also-rans. Jaguars quarterback Blake Bortles revived a stagnant offense, completing 13 of 26 passes for 115 yards and a touchdown, a 4-yard pass to Mercedes Lewis that got Jacksonville going late in the second quarter after a poor start. Jordan Todman's 62-yard run then put the Jaguars ahead for good. He juked one defender and stiff-armed another in his first carry of the night, and his first score of the season. But Sen'Derrick

Marks' sack was the most rewarding. With the Titans driving, Marks sacked Charlie Whitehurst on the final play. It gave him 8 1/2 sacks for the season, triggering a \$600,000 bonus in his contract. He stood up and rubbed his fingers together before getting mobbed by teammates near midfield.

The Jaguars (3-12) won for the second time in four weeks, providing a late filip to a disappointing season and encouragement for 2015. Tennessee (2-13) lost its ninth consecutive game and moved a step closer to securing the No. 1 draft pick.

The Titans were led by third-string quarterback Whitehurst, who complet-

ed all six of his passes and capped an 84-yard drive on the Titans' first possession with an 8-yard scoring pass to Leon Washington. The Titans picked up more points midway through the second quarter. On third-and-18, Whitehurst found Kendall Wright in soft coverage over the middle for a 13-yard gain that enabled Ryan Succop to kick a 50-yard field goal.

At that point, the Titans had a 179-16 advantage in yards, but the contest soon turned around.

Bortles led the hosts on an 80-yard drive at the end of the first half, ending it with a 1-yard pass to tight end Lewis in the left corner of the end zone.

Jacksonville got the ball to



Jacksonville Jaguars running back Jordan Todman (30) smiles as he runs 62 yards for a touchdown against the Tennessee Titans during the fourth quarter of an NFL football game Thursday, Dec. 18, 2014, in Jacksonville, Fla.

Associated Press

start the second half, and Bortles found Marquise Lee on a 34-yard catch-and-run on third-and-7. After two more completions, Jacksonville went to some trickery with a backward to Cecil Shorts III, who then threw across the field to Todman to the 9.

It looked as if the Jaguars

would have to settle for a tying field goal when Bortles scrambled down the sideline to the 2 on third-and-goal. But Titans linebacker Avery Williamson was called for holding, giving the Jaguars another chance and Toby Gerhart ran in from the 1 on the next play. □



## NBA Capsules

# Warriors overcome slow start to beat Thunder 114-109

**The Associated Press**  
**OAKLAND, California**  
**(AP)** — Stephen Curry had 34 points and nine assists, and the Golden State Warriors rallied from an early 17-point deficit to beat Oklahoma City 114-109 on Thursday night after Thunder star Kevin Durant left with a sprained right ankle. Durant scored a season-high 30 points on 10-for-13 shooting in a spectacular first half that ended with him stepping on Marreese Speights' foot. The Thunder said Durant had a mild ankle sprain, and the NBA MVP did not return. Oklahoma City had won seven straight games, which was the longest active streak in the league after Memphis snapped Golden State's 16-game winning streak Tuesday night. Curry added seven rebounds, and Klay

Thompson scored 19 points for the Warriors, who played without injured center Andrew Bogut (right knee) and forward David Lee (left hamstring) again. Russell Westbrook led the Thunder with 33 points. **PELICANS 99, ROCKETS 90**  
**HOUSTON (AP)** — Anthony Davis had 30 points, 14 rebounds and five blocks to lead New Orleans over Houston. The Pelicans trailed by one early in the fourth quarter before using a 7-0 run to take a 79-73 lead and they didn't trail again. Ryan Anderson scored the last five points in that spurt to help New Orleans snap a six-game skid in Houston. Jrue Holiday added 16 points with 10 assists for New Orleans and Anderson had 16 points. James Harden scored 21 and Dwight Howard had 17 points with 13



Golden State Warriors' Stephen Curry, left, celebrates with Draymond Green after Curry scored in the final seconds of an NBA basketball game against the Oklahoma City Thunder on Thursday, Dec. 18, 2014, in Oakland, Calif. The Warriors won 114-109.

Associated Press

rebounds for the Rockets, who lost for just the second time in nine games.

Harden entered leading the NBA in scoring and had scored more than 40 points in two of his last three games. But he had a tough night by his standards and made just eight of 23 shots. **BULLS 103, KNICKS 97**  
**CHICAGO (AP)** — Jimmy Butler scored a career-high 35 points and Chicago beat New York in a game missing All-Stars Derrick Rose and Carmelo Anthony. Playing without Rose, who sat out with an illness, the Bulls got another strong game from Butler. He was 11 of 21 from the floor with four 3-pointers, five rebounds, seven assists and four steals. Still, the Bulls had trouble shaking a short-handed New York team that's lost three straight and 13 of 14. Pau Gasol scored 20 points for Chicago, which went on a 12-0 run in the fourth quarter to take an 87-77 lead. The Knicks were led by

Tim Hardaway Jr., who had 23 points and five 3-pointers. Anthony was sidelined with a sore left knee. New York also was without Andrea Bargnani (right hamstring), Cleanthony Early (right knee), Iman Shumpert (left shoulder) and J.R. Smith (left foot). **BUCKS 108, KINGS 107**  
**SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)** — Brandon Knight scored 20 points and Milwaukee spoiled DeMarcus Cousins' return to the struggling Sacramento Kings. With their inside game lacking due to missing players, the Bucks shot well from the perimeter for much of the night in winning their third in four games. They went 10 of 14 from 3-point range in the first half and made 13 overall from beyond the arc. O.J. Mayo and Jared Dudley added 19 points apiece for Milwaukee, outscored 48-26 in the paint. Playing for the first time in more than three weeks, Cousins looked fatigued at times but still had 27 points, 11 rebounds and five assists in nearly 33 minutes for the Kings. He missed a 15-foot jumper at the buzzer that would have won it. Cousins sat out 10 straight games with viral meningitis, and the Kings went 2-8 in his absence. He last played Nov. 26 at Houston. Ben McLemore scored 22 points, and Rudy Gay had 20 points and nine rebounds. Sacramento has dropped five straight and 10 of 12. The Kings were playing their second game since the surprise firing Sunday of coach Michael Malone, who was replaced by interim coach Tyrone Corbin. □

## Celtics trade Rajon Rondo to Mavericks

**JIMMY GOLEN**  
**AP Sports Writer**

**BOSTON (AP)** — The Boston Celtics traded point guard Rajon Rondo to Dallas on Thursday, cutting ties with the last remnant of their last NBA championship while giving Dirk Nowitzki and the Mavericks a chance at another title. The Celtics will send Rondo and forward Dwight Powell to Dallas for Jameer Nelson, Jae Crowder, Brandan Wright, two draft picks and a \$12.9 million trade exception. Boston got a first-round pick in next year's draft and a second-rounder in 2016. The Celtics have eight first-round picks in the next four years, picking them up in trades for Kevin Garnett and Paul Pierce and even coach Doc Rivers as they shed the pieces of the New Big Three that earned the

franchise its unprecedented 17th NBA title in 2008. "We would not have won Banner 17 without Rajon and will always consider him one of our most valuable Celtics," the team's owners said in a joint statement. "We will always cherish the time he was here." The Mavericks get a pass-first point guard — a four-time all-star — to team with Nowitzki, Monta Ellis, Chandler Parsons and Tyson Chandler in what they hope will make them a contender again. Dallas is 19-8 this season but in third place in the Southwest Division and sixth in the Western Conference. The Mavericks, who won their only NBA title in 2011, have not won a playoff series since. The deal has been years in the making, with the Celtics shopping Rondo every time



In this Wednesday, Dec. 17, 2014 photo, Boston Celtics guard Rajon Rondo (9) drives during the second half of an NBA basketball game against the Orlando Magic in Boston.

Associated Press

a coach grows tired of his moods or his contract expectations grow too large for their budget. But every previous time Boston management decided that the offers weren't enough. Celtics general manager Danny Ainge found a partner in Dallas, which is coached by his former Boston teammate Rick Carlisle. □



## NHL Capsules

# Comeau leads Penguins over Avalanche 1-0, OT

**PITTSBURGH (AP)** — Blake Comeau scored 2:24 into overtime to give the Pittsburgh Penguins a 1-0 victory over the Colorado Avalanche on Thursday night. Marc-Andre Fleury stopped 29 shots, registering his sixth shutout of the season just hours after the Penguins thought their starting goalie had the mumps.

Fleury, who recorded his 34th NHL shutout, was tested after missing Wednesday's practice with an illness, but the results came back negative and he was cleared for Thursday's game.

Sidney Crosby also returned Thursday after missing three games with the mumps, as the Penguins managed three wins and five of a possible six points without their captain. They have won six of nine.

Comeau's goal was his 11th of the season. He tapped the winner past goalie Calvin Pickard after Evgeni Malkin deflected Rob Scuderi's shot from the point in front.

Pickard stopped 47 shots for the Avalanche, who lost for the sixth time in seven games.

HURRICANES 4, MAPLE LEAFS 1

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Justin Faulk had a goal and an assist, and Eastern Conference-worst Carolina broke a six-game losing streak with a win over previously surging Toronto.

The Hurricanes (9-19-3), who entered with the NHL's worst record, had scored only one goal in each game of their skid. Their offensive outburst snapped the Maple Leafs' six-game winning streak.

Chris Terry, Andrej Sekera, and Elias Lindholm also scored for Carolina. Nathan Gerbe and Eric Staal both had two assists. The Hurricanes are 19-7-1 against the Maple Leafs in the last 27 meetings.

Dion Phaneuf scored for Toronto.

Cam Ward had 25 saves

for Carolina. Toronto's Jonathan Bernier stopped 33 shots.

CAPITALS 5, BLUE JACKETS 4, OT

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Eric Fehr scored 42 seconds into overtime to lead Washington over Columbus. The Capitals extended their point streak to seven games and snapped the Blue Jackets' winning streak at seven.

Joel Ward, Jason Chimera, Karl Alzner and Troy Brouwer also scored for the Capitals, 5-0-2 in their last seven games — including a 20-round shootout loss at Florida on Tuesday. Braden Holtby had 22 saves.

Nick Foligno had two goals and an assist, Michael Chaput scored his first NHL goal, and Jack Johnson also tallied for the Blue Jackets, who fell one short of tying the team's longest winning streak. Bobrovsky stopped 31 shots.

Columbus went past regulation for the fifth straight game and for the sixth time in seven.

PANTHERS 2, FLYERS 1, SO PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Dave Bolland scored the winning goal in the shootout to lead Florida over Philadelphia.

Brandon Pirri also had a goal in the shootout for Florida (14-8-8), which played beyond regulation for the fourth straight game.

The Panthers were coming off Tuesday's 2-1 victory over Washington that set an NHL record by going 20 shootout rounds. Nick Bjugstad scored the winning tally in the shootout of that game but missed against Philadelphia.

This one took six rounds as only Pirri and Philadelphia's Jakub Voracek scored in the three regulation rounds of the shootout. After Bolland beat Steve Mason, Roberto Luongo stopped Sean Couturier to send the Panthers to the win.

Florida improved to 4-4 in shootouts while Philadelphia dropped to 0-5.

Scottie Upshall scored in regulation for Florida. Voracek had Philadelphia's goal.

DUCKS 2, CANADIENS 1

MONTREAL (AP) — Matt Beleskey scored the tie-breaking goal in the third period to lead Anaheim over Montreal in a game the host Canadiens lost top scorer Max Pacioretty to an injury.

Hampus Lindholm also scored for Anaheim and Frederik Andersen made 23 saves for his 18th win.

David Desharnais scored for Montreal, and Carey Price stopped 21 shots.

Pacioretty left the game 4 minutes into the third period after taking a late hit into the boards from Anaheim's Clayton Stoner. Pacioretty spent several seconds on his knees before being helped to the dressing room.

With P.K. Subban just stepping out of the penalty box, Beleskey got the go-ahead score — his team-leading 15th goal — by beating Price at 8:33 of the third period.

KINGS 6, BLUES 4

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Jake Muzzin scored the tie-



**Pittsburgh Penguins' Blake Comeau (17) celebrates with teammates Evgeni Malkin (71) and Rob Scuderi (4) after scoring in overtime of an NHL hockey game against the Colorado Avalanche in Pittsburgh on Thursday, Dec. 18, 2014. The Penguins won 1-0.**  
Associated Press

breaking power-play goal with 11:02 to play, Marian Gaborik had two goals and two assists, and Los Angeles rallied for a victory over St. Louis.

Anze Kopitar and Jeff Carter each had a goal and three assists as the defending Stanley Cup champions avenged a loss in St. Louis on Tuesday with just

their second win in seven games.

Kopitar matched his career high with four points, and Dwight King scored from the red line with 7:54 left on a bizarre bounce over Martin Brodeur to cap a rough night for the NHL's career victories leader in his third start for St. Louis.

SHARKS 4, OILERS 3

## Former NBA center Milicic loses kickboxing debut

**NOVI SAD, Serbia (AP)** — Former NBA center Darko Milicic, a 7-foot Serb who spent 10 years with various teams after being the second overall pick in the 2003 draft behind LeBron James, has lost his first kickboxing fight.

The 29-year-old Milicic sustained a bloody cut on his left leg in the first round of an exhibition match Thursday night against Serbian fighter Radovan Radojcic. The World Kickboxing As-

sociation bout had to be stopped in the second round on doctor's orders.

"The next time, it will be better," Milicic said. "I'm invincible."

The Detroit Pistons bypassed Carmelo Anthony, Chris Bosh and Dwayne Wade to take Milicic with the second pick in 2003. The team then went on to win the 2004 NBA title.

Milicic, who has been without an NBA contract for two years, also played for



**Former NBA player Darko Milicic, facing, fights against Radovan Radojcic during their kickboxing match at the Soul Night of Champions, in Novi Sad, Serbia, Thursday, Dec. 18, 2014. Milicic is switching from basketball to kickboxing.**  
Associated Press

Orlando, Memphis, New York, Minnesota and Boston during his time in the league.



# Wall Street inches higher after two-day rally

**MATTHEW CRAFT**  
**AP Business Writer**

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Oil and gas companies led the stock market up Friday, helping the Standard & Poor's 500 index notch its second-best week this

York, as traders bet that a 6-month plunge in prices had gone too far. Chevron, Denbury Resources and other energy companies led nine of the 10 sectors in the S&P 500 to gains. Nike's stock dropped \$2.24,

trial average rose 26.65 points, or 0.1 percent, to 17,804.80. At the start of the week, slumping oil prices and the state of the world economy were investors' main worries. A plunge in the Russian

driving the S&P 500 up 4.5 percent over two days.

"It's just crazy volatility," said Jim Paulsen, chief investment strategist and economist at Wells Capital Management. Paulsen pointed to the magnitude of the market's turn. Before the Fed's statement came out on Wednesday, the S&P 500 was on course for a second week of losses. Two days later, it closed out one of its best weeks this year.

Stock markets in Asia climbed in the wake of the big gains in Europe and the U.S. on Thursday. Japan's Nikkei 225 jumped 2.4 percent, while South Korea's Kospi added 1.7 percent. Hong Kong's Hang Seng advanced 1.3 percent.

"The major equity markets are finishing the trading year on a positive note thanks to Janet Yellen's Christmas message," said Neil MacKinnon, global macros strategist at VTB Capital. He said that with no major economic reports coming out, the markets will soon "switch into holiday mode," as traders head off for vacations.

Back in the U.S., strong quarterly results from Red Hat, an open-source software company, drove its stock up 11 percent, the biggest gain in the S&P 500. Red Hat reported better earnings and sales than analysts had expected late Thursday. Its stock soared \$6.54 to \$68.04.

CarMax jumped 11 percent after the used-car dealership posted a 22 percent surge in its quarterly profits thanks to higher sales.

## U.S. signals an end to bailouts of automakers and Wall Street

**JONATHAN WEISMAN**  
**© 2014 New York Times**

**WASHINGTON** — The Obama administration declared a profitable end to the Wall Street and auto bailouts Friday, saying a final sale of stock from what was once General Motors' finance arm had closed a turbulent six-year chapter of the financial crisis.

Treasury Secretary Jacob J. Lew said that while profit was not the motive to bail out Detroit and Wall Street, "it is important to note we recovered more than we disbursed."

The federal interventions agitated the political world and helped give rise to the Tea Party movement. But in the end, they yielded \$15.35 billion, eight years after the Bush administration started pumping money into industries in free fall, Treasury officials said Friday.

In all, through the Troubled Asset Relief Program and other efforts, taxpayers pumped \$426.35 billion into banks and auto companies. The sale of stock and interest payments brought in \$441.7 billion.

"There is more work to do, but as we exit the last major financial investment, it's important to take stock of the progress we have made and the critical role TARP and the Auto Industry Financing Program played in getting us to this point," Lew said in a statement that echoed self-congratulatory remarks on the economy from other administration officials this week.

Less than \$1 billion in taxpayer funds remain scattered in about 35 community banks around the country, but with the sale Thursday of the government's last 54.9 million shares of Ally Financial, previously known as GMAC, the Treasury declared the bailouts done.

The bailout of GMAC started Dec. 29, 2008, with a \$5 billion infusion in the last days of the Bush administration.



Traders work on the floor at the New York Stock Exchange in New York. Oil and gas companies led the stock market up Friday, helping the Standard & Poor's 500 index notch its second-best week this year.

(AP Photo/Seth Wenig)

year. With little news to give them direction, traders continued to push indexes higher. That extended a rally from Wednesday when the Federal Reserve said it was in no hurry to hike interest rates.

"What a very crazy week," said Sam Stovall, chief equity strategist at S&P Capital IQ.

Benchmark U.S. crude bounced up from recent lows, climbing \$2.36 to settle at \$56.52 a barrel in New

or 2 percent, to \$94.84. The maker of athletic apparel posted results that beat Wall Street's forecasts late Thursday, but a drop in orders from Japan and developing markets in Asia overshadowed an otherwise strong quarter.

The S&P 500 gained 9.42 points, or 0.5 percent, to 2,070.65, bringing its weekly gain to 3.4 percent.

The Nasdaq composite picked up 16.98 points, or 0.4 percent, to 4,765.38, and the Dow Jones indus-

currency, the ruble, added to a sense of unease.

The turnaround came Wednesday, when Janet Yellen, the Federal Reserve chairwoman, said she saw no reason to hike interest rates in early 2015 and that the central bank would be "patient" in deciding when to raise rates from near zero. Her comments eased concerns that the Fed would start raising rates when growth in other major economies has looked weak. Traders celebrated,

## BlackBerry narrows loss, but revenue declines

**IAN AUSTEN**  
**© 2014 New York Times**

**OTTAWA, Ontario** — BlackBerry narrowed its loss in its third quarter, the company reported Friday, but revenue declined as it continued to shift its business from smartphones to software. The company reported revenue of \$793 million during the three months ending in November. That was down from \$1.1 billion in the pe-

riod a year earlier. And despite the introduction of a heavily publicized phone, revenue declined from the \$916 million the company posted during its previous quarter.

BlackBerry said it lost \$148 million, or 28 cents a share, during the quarter, compared with a loss of \$207 million, or 39 cents a share, in the second quarter. In the period a year earlier,

BlackBerry recorded a loss of \$4.4 billion, or \$8.37 a share, which led to concerns about its viability as well as a management reshuffling that resulted in the appointment of John S. Chen as president and chief executive.

The company said that much of the third quarter's loss came from a \$150 million re-evaluation of some of its debt. The compa-

ny also had restructuring charges of \$5 million in the period.

The company said that consumers and businesses bought 1.9 million of its phones in the three-month period.

By comparison, Apple sold about 10 million iPhone 6 and iPhone 6 Plus handsets in the first three days after their introduction in September.



# Amazon and Macmillan reach multiyear deal

**HILLEL ITALIE**

**AP National Writer**

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Another major publisher has reached a multiyear deal with Amazon.com.

Amazon and Macmillan CEO John Sargent confirmed this week that they had agreed to terms for both print and electronic books. The deal will allow

Macmillan to set prices for e-books, an arrangement known as the "agency model," and appears similar to agreements Amazon reached in the past two months with Hachette Book Group and Simon & Schuster. Authors at Macmillan range from Jonathan Franzen and Hilary Mantel to Oprah Winfrey and Bill

O'Reilly. "We are happy with this agreement, as it allows us to grow our business together with Macmillan and their authors," Amazon spokeswoman Sarah Gelman said Friday, using wording that closely follows Amazon statements following the Hachette and Simon & Schuster deals. "Importantly, the

agreement specifically creates a financial incentive for Macmillan to deliver lower prices for readers." Sargent, meanwhile, announced the news in a much sharper, more skeptical tone. Among the CEOs of the top New York publishers, he has been the most openly critical of Amazon and of the anti-

trust lawsuit brought by the government in 2012 against Macmillan, Hachette, Simon & Schuster and two other companies. The five publishers were accusing of colluding with Apple, which had recently launched its iBooks store and implemented the agency model, to rig e-book prices. □

# T-Mobile paying at least \$90M for unwanted services

**MARCY GORDON**

**AP Business Writer**

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — T-Mobile US will pay at least \$90 million, mostly in refunds, for billing customers for cellphone text services they didn't order, under a settlement with federal regulators.

The Federal Trade Commission announced the agreement Friday with T-Mobile over billing for unauthorized charges, a practice known as "cramming." T-Mobile, the fourth-largest U.S. cellphone company, is paying at least \$67.5 million in refunds to affected customers plus \$18 million in fines to the 50 states and the District of Columbia, and \$4.5 million in fines to the Federal Communications Commission.

The FTC sued T-Mobile in July, accusing it of billing customers for subscriptions to text services like \$9.99-per-month horoscopes, ringtones, "flirting tips" or celebrity gossip updates that they didn't want or authorize.

T-Mobile collected 35 percent to 40 percent of the charges, even after being alerted by customers that they were bogus, the FTC alleges. That earned the

company hundreds of millions of dollars, the agency said.

"We learned during this case that T-Mobile was in bed with the cramblers," said Travis LeBlanc, head of the FTC's enforcement

Officials told reporters on a conference call that the \$90 million was a floor, not a maximum, for the amount that T-Mobile could end up paying. "It could be well north of \$100 million," said Bill Sorrell, the attorney

customers. The company didn't provide an estimate of how much it has paid in refunds to date.

T-Mobile US Inc., based in Bellevue, Washington, is controlled by Germany's Deutsche Telekom AG. It's

Under the settlement, T-Mobile must provide full refunds to all its customers affected by the "cramming," and the amount it pays in refunds and fines must reach at least \$90 million. If the payout doesn't reach that amount, the difference between what T-Mobile pays and \$90 million will go to the FTC for additional relief to consumers, consumer education or other uses.

T-Mobile also must contact all of its affected customers, both current and former, to tell them about the refund program and how they can make a claim. That must be done in a "clear and conspicuous way," the FTC said. Going forward, T-Mobile must get customers' explicit consent before putting third-party charges on their bills. The company must clearly indicate any third-party charges on the bills.

The settlement with T-Mobile came two days after another federal regulator, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, sued rival Sprint Corp. for alleged cellphone "cramming." The CFPB is seeking an unspecified money penalty against Sprint. □



**A man uses a cellphone as he passes a T-Mobile store in New York. T-Mobile US will pay at least \$90 million, mostly in refunds, for billing customers for cellphone text services they didn't order, under a settlement with federal regulators.**  
(AP Photo/Mark Lennihan)

bureau. He was referring to the third-party companies that put charges on phone bills for text services. Many consumers aren't aware that third-party companies can do that, the regulators say.

general of Vermont. A T-Mobile spokeswoman said the company had no immediate comment on the settlement. T-Mobile began a refund program in July and has said it has notified current and former

the No. 4 U.S. cellphone carrier after Verizon Wireless, AT&T Mobility and Sprint.

The settlement must be approved by a federal court in Seattle, where the FTC filed its lawsuit.

# Big catch for Thai co. in \$1.5B bid for Bumble Bee

**BANGKOK (AP)** — A Thai food company may be landing another whopper in the U.S. with its \$1.5 billion bid for Bumble Bee Seafoods.

Thai Union Frozen Products, which already owns Chicken of the Sea, another major seller of tuna and other seafoods, has now hooked the largest canned sea-

food company in North America.

That would put two of the big three in the U.S., the other being Starkist, in its basket.

The deal must still be approved by U.S. regulators, which could block the takeover or require the company to divest some of its holdings for competi-

tive reasons.

Bumble Bee was acquired by the British investment firm Lion Capital LLP in late 2010. If approved, Thai Union expects to take ownership in the second half of next year.

Thai Union has annual sales exceeding 100 billion baht (\$3 billion) with a worldwide workforce of more

than 35,000, the company said. San Diego's Bumble Bee generates annual sales of approximately \$1 billion with a workforce of more than 1,300 people. Thiraphong Chansiri, the president and CEO of Thai Union, said it would be the company's largest acquisition ever.

"Upon completion, the

transaction will be immediately accretive to TUF's earnings and cash flows," he said. Absorbing Bumble Bee would lower costs and improve efficiency.

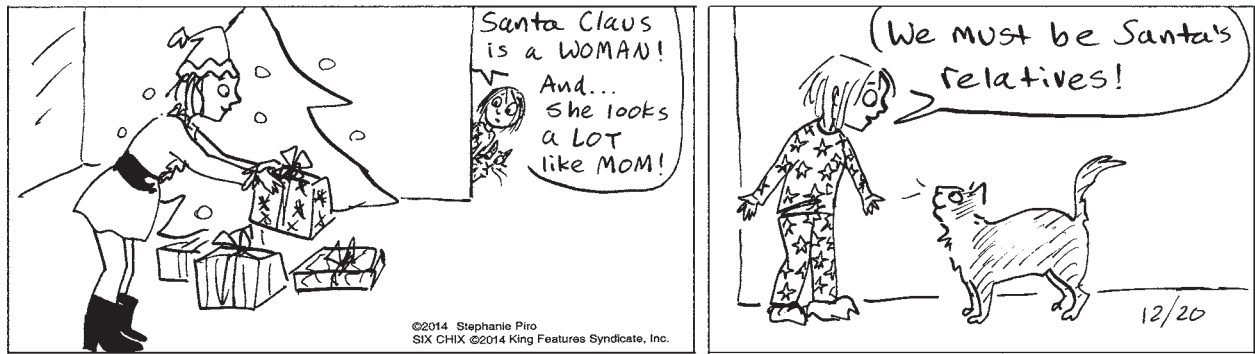
Other international brands controlled by Thai Union include John West, King Oscar, Petit Navire, Parmentier, Mareblu, and Century. □



Mutts



6 Chix



Blondie



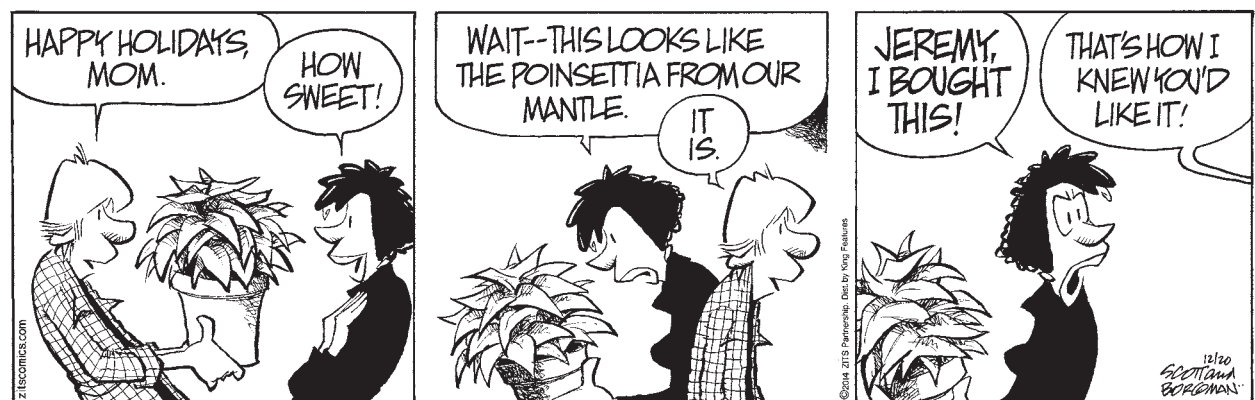
Mother Goose & Grimm



Baby Blues



Zits



Conceptis Sudoku

	3	2		8		1	9	
4					5			3
	1		8		3			
5								1
			4		7		3	
8			1					9
	5	7		2		8	6	

Difficulty Level ★★★★★ 12/20

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

Yesterday's puzzle answer
 

2	4	6	7	9	1	8	5	3
3	1	9	5	4	8	6	7	2
5	8	7	2	6	3	9	4	1
6	5	2	1	3	7	4	8	9
8	7	3	9	5	4	2	1	6
4	9	1	6	8	2	5	3	7
1	2	4	8	7	9	3	6	5
7	6	8	3	2	5	1	9	4
9	3	5	4	1	6	7	2	8

ACROSS

- 1 Señorita or Fraülein  
 5 Peaks  
 10 "... sea to shining sea."  
 14 Qualified  
 15 Debonair  
 16 "The Hawkeye State"  
 17 Small duck  
 18 Pay for another's meal  
 19 Narrow valley  
 20 Take advantage of  
 22 Duke's wife  
 24 Belonging to us  
 25 Bus station  
 26 Influence; pull  
 29 Auction offer  
 30 Goes first  
 34 Dryer residue  
 35 Scandinavia's flagship airline  
 36 Intestinal bulge  
 37 Wan Kenobi  
 38 Capital of Venezuela  
 40 on; apply lightly  
 41 USC athlete  
 43 -mouth; vilify  
 44 Cowboy Autry  
 45 Capital of Vietnam  
 46 Over-the-hill  
 47 Actor Romero  
 48 Bring together  
 50 Enemy  
 51 Up-to-date  
 54 Birdbrains  
 58 Come \_\_; find  
 59 Log house  
 61 Israeli dance  
 62 Easy stride  
 63 Not sleeping  
 64 Suffix for an inflammation  
 65 \_\_ upon; victimize  
 66 More rational  
 67 Hits with a stun gun

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
14					15						16			
17					18						19			
20					21			22			23			
				24				25						
26	27	28			29				30	31	32	33		
34					35				36					
37					38				39			40		
41			42					43			44			
45								46			47			
					48	49			50					
51	52	53						54			55	56	57	
58								59	60			61		
62								63				64		
65								66				67		

Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews 12/20/14

Friday's Puzzle Solved

WIPE	SALTS	PROP
IDOL	CLOAK	RUDE
MESS	REPRIMANDS	
PAS	JARS	ANGST
	ERUPT	TIC
JASONS	MADEUP	
ENSUE	CRIBS	NET
SNIT	PAULS	SPEW
TIN	RULED	POLKA
	EGOISM	DURESS
	UGH	COTTA
SLOTH	MACS	SAW
CAPITALIST	PAPA	
OVEN	DITTO	ONES
TANG	DETER	ITSA

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- 3 \_\_ in the face; insult  
 4 Betray  
 5 Up and about  
 6 Brusque; brief  
 7 Actress West  
 8 Sidestepped  
 9 Arrange  
 10 Boxer  
 11 Actor's part  
 12 Has debts  
 13 "A \_\_ home is his castle"  
 21 Not at home  
 23 Nat and Natalie  
 25 Maim; cripple  
 26 Fabric  
 27 Zodiac sign  
 28 Shallot, for one  
 29 Forbid entry to  
 31 Highest mountain range outside of Asia  
 32 Singer \_\_ Ross  
 33 Fencing sword  
 35 \_\_ Diego, CA  
 36 "I've \_\_ it!"; cry of frustration  
 38 Actor Michael

DOWN

- 1 Partner  
 2 Mountain goat

- 39 Womanizer  
 42 Trip  
 44 Old-fashioned cry of surprise  
 46 Capital of Canada  
 47 Rollaway bed  
 49 Indians of Peru  
 50 Not as coarse  
 51 Actor Robert  
 52 "Put \_\_ shut up!"  
 53 Lasso  
 54 Shoe brand  
 55 Smidgen  
 56 Stumble  
 57 Impudent talk  
 60 Forbid



## A balanced defense has Buffalo thinking playoffs

MATT HIGGINS

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**ORCHARD PARK, N.Y.** - The defining play may have come from the right paw of Buffalo's 6-foot-7 Pro Bowl defensive end Mario Williams. Yet no member of a self-effacing and dominant Bills defense is willing to consider that the team's dramatic upset of the Green Bay Packers on Sunday was a single-handed achievement.

With less than two minutes remaining in the game, and Buffalo clinging to a six-point lead, Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers took a snap from center at the Green Bay 10-yard line and dropped back to pass. Williams muscled past right tackle JC Tretter, employing his long reach to swat the ball free.

Rodgers searched frantically. By the time running back Eddie Lacy scooped up the loose ball in the end zone, the Bills had a safety, en route to a surprising 21-13 victory that dropped the Packers to 10-4.

Linebacker Brandon Spikes said the Bills had practiced the play in their two-minute drill schemes.

"At that moment, I knew he was going to make the play because we already spoke about that situation with the game on the line," Spikes said.

The safety was credited as a sack by Williams, his team-leading 13th. Buffalo (8-6) leads the NFL with 49 sacks and is fifth in the

league in defense, allowing an average of 313.4 yards per game.

With two games remaining, beginning Sunday against the Oakland Raiders, the Bills have a chance to qualify for the playoffs for the first time since the 1999 season, the longest drought of any team. Oakland is 2-12 and ranks last in the NFL in offense.

This week, Williams, who also blocked a field goal attempt in the second quarter against Green Bay, swatted away questions about his individual play. He instead invoked camaraderie among teammates, a theme echoing the halls at the team's practice facility, especially among a four-man defensive line that has consistently rattled opposing quarterbacks.

That unit harassed Rodgers, who completed 17 of 42 passes for 185 yards with two interceptions by reserve safety Bacarri Rambo, for a career-worst 34.3 passer rating.

"What makes it so difficult to defend those players is that they have both strength and speed," coach Doug Marrone said. "That's the combination where they can beat you multiple ways; with power moves or speed moves. I think that when you have that capability and when you possess that talent, you can cause an opponent a problem, just like other people we've played have done that to us." □

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24/7

## Study: Alcatraz inmates could have survived escape

**SAN FRANCISCO (AP)**

-- The three prisoners who escaped from Alcatraz in one of the most famous and elaborate prison breaks in U.S. history could have survived and made it to land, scientists concluded in a recent study.

The three Dutch scientists, using the latest hydraulic software and information about tides on the night of the 1962 escape, said the three men could have made it to land north of the Golden Gate Bridge if they left between 11:00 p.m. and midnight. If they left before 11 p.m., the strong currents of San Francisco Bay would have carried them to the Pacific Ocean and death, the scientists said.

Prison officials and federal agents insisted at the time of the es-



In this June 12, 1962, file photo, Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary in San Francisco Bay is shown the day three prisoners escaped.

when they pulled off the escape with stolen spoons, dummy heads and a raincoat raft. Their exploits were turned into the 1979 movie "Escape from Alcatraz," starring Clint Eastwood as Morris.

U.S. Marshal Michael Dyke, who inherited the unsolved case in 2003, told The Associated Press two years ago that he didn't know whether any of the trio was still alive. But he had seen enough evidence to make him wonder.

That evidence included credible reports that the Anglins' mother, for several years, received flowers delivered without a card and that the brothers attended her 1973 funeral disguised in women's clothes despite a heavy FBI presence.

For their study, the Dutch scientists simulated scores of boat launches from different points on Alcatraz Island every 30 minutes between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. on the night of the escape. They also factored in the possibility that the inmates paddled.

The model that concluded they could have reached land north of the Golden Gate Bridge also found that any debris they released in the water would have floated toward another island in the bay.

The researchers said they did not set out to study the Alcatraz escape. The project was initially intended to analyze flood risk to large industrial facilities on the bay.

## CERN nuclear physics lab admits Pakistan

**JOHN HEILPRIN**  
**Associated Press**

**GENEVA (AP)** — The world's top particle physics lab has admitted Pakistan as an associate member, a year after Israel was voted in as a full member.

Rolf Heuer, director general of the European Organization for Nuclear Research, known as CERN, says he signed a document Friday in Islamabad in the presence of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif that admits Pakistan if the government ratifies the associate membership.

Heuer said in a statement Friday that Pakistan has been "a strong partici-

pant" in CERN research since the 1990s — and its inclusion in the lab's community serves other important purposes as well.

"Bringing nations together in a peaceful quest for knowledge and education is one of the most important missions of CERN," he said.

The status upgrade means nuclear-armed Pakistan will have more access and say in the research, and that it will be able to bid for contracts, but also that it must contribute more financially each year to the facility.

Pakistan and CERN signed a cooperation agreement

in 1994 through which the nation has contributed to the lab's major experiments and become involved in developing CERN's particle accelerator.

Pakistan became a nuclear power in 1988. It routinely test-fires what it claims are indigenously developed missiles.

Last December, the governing council of CERN unanimously voted to accept Israel as the 21st full member, making it the first non-European country to achieve that status. Israel had gained observer status in 1991 and then became an associate member in 2011.

cape that the inmates — brothers John and Clarence Anglin and Frank Morris — perished, but their bodies were never found, continuing speculation that they survived.

"Of course, this doesn't prove that" they survived, one of the scientists, Rolf Hut, a researcher at Delft University of Technology in The Netherlands, said in a news release about the study. "But the latest and best hydraulic modelling information indicates that it was certainly possible."

The scientists presented their findings Tuesday at the American Geophysical Union conference in San Francisco. The three prisoners were serving sentences for bank robbery



# Will artists skip studio support after Sony scandal?

**SANDY COHEN**

**AP Entertainment Writer  
LOS ANGELES (AP)** — Sony's decision to cancel "The Interview" in the face of terrorist threats is already affecting the way Hollywood does business. It has outraged artists, killing their faith in studios to release edgy content. But it's also inspired a rare hush across a usually chatty industry as everyone from moguls to makeup artists takes stock of the scandal and how it could affect their jobs.

Actors, filmmakers, politicians and pundits roundly denounced Sony's decision on Wednesday to nix "The Interview" in response to theater owners' refusal to show the Christmas release in light of threats invoking 9/11. But after venting on social media, Hollywood mostly went quiet.

Gore Verbinski said Wednesday that Fox pulled out of plans to support his North Korea-set thriller, but his representative didn't respond to inquiries Thursday. Theaters that arranged to screen 2004's "Team America: World Police" in place of "The Interview" announced Thursday those showings had been canceled, but the studio behind the film, Paramount, declined to comment.

"The Interview" stars Seth Rogen and James Franco as journalists tasked by the CIA with killing North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, who is shown dying in a fiery explosion.

"Sad day for creative expression," Steve Carell tweeted after its release was canceled. Jimmy Kimmel described the move as "an un-American act of cowardice that validates terrorist actions and sets a terrifying precedent."

As if the industry needed more reasons to drive people out of theaters. This action comes as Hollywood is already struggling against the lure of top-notch home entertainment systems amid rising ticket costs, notes Todd

Boyd, film and culture professor at the University of Southern California.

Amplifying this challenge, artists could increasingly turn to the web as a way

can to get this movie out. Not because everybody has to see the movie, but because I'm not going to be told we can't see the movie. That's the most

timidate the creative process, what are we gonna be stuck with?"

Boyd, however, said it was naive of Sony to proceed with the film without ex-

and as it turned out, Sony had to pay the price for making a bad decision."

Other studios are likely to carefully consider films that take swipes at the reclusive nation, he said.

Oscar-winning screenwriter Aaron Sorkin blasted the studio and the media at large for their reactions to the Sony hack.

"Today the U.S. succumbed to an unprecedented attack on our most cherished, bedrock principle of free speech by a group of North Korean terrorists who threatened to kill moviegoers in order to stop the release of a movie," he said in a statement Wednesday. "The wishes of the terrorists were fulfilled in part by easily distracted members of the American press who chose gossip and schadenfreude-fueled reporting over a story with immeasurable consequences for the public."

Of course, the most damaging corporate hacking in American history has implications far beyond Hollywood. Is it OK to joke about it? "The Interview" is now poised to shatter the world record for 'spite viewings,'" comedian Patton Oswalt wrote on Twitter. He later added: "All joking aside, we just gave a comfy foothold to censorship & it doesn't get any better from this point on." □



A poster for the movie "The Interview" lays on the ground after being pulled from a display case by a worker at a Carmike Cinemas movie theater, Wednesday, Dec. 17, 2014, in Atlanta.

Associated Press

to distribute content without studio interference. Lizz Winstead, a creator of "The Daily Show," suggested the creative community may have to go even further.

"Do performers and artists need to start buying theaters so we aren't beholden to the multiplexes now?" she asked. "I feel like if this is the message from the studios, what is going to be the action for all of us who see how profoundly we can all just be cut off at the knees."

George Clooney says Hollywood's creative community should take action now by pushing for the immediate release of "The Interview" online.

"We should be in the position right now of going on offense with this," Clooney told the trade site Deadline on Thursday. "I just talked to Amy (Pascal, Sony Pictures co-chair) an hour ago. She wants to put that movie out. What do I do? My partner Grant Heslov and I had the conversation with her this morning. ... Stick it online. Do whatever you

important part. We cannot be told we can't see something by Kim Jong Un, of all f---ing people." Silencing creative expression in response to terrorists' demands stifles the very thing art seeks to explore, Winstead said.

"So now, creatively, when we can't respond as a catharsis, as a reflection of where society's at, because somebody can in-

pecting some blowback from the North Korean government. Free speech is an American value, he said, not a North Korean one.

"It's provocative to make a film where a living figure is assassinated, in spite of what you may think about that figure," Boyd said. "To do so in a comedy seems especially arrogant and inconsiderate and naive,

## Actress Diane Guerrero writing memoir

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Through her own story, Diane Guerrero wants to change the lives of others.

Henry Holt and Company announced Thursday that the Colombian-American actress known for "Orange Is the New Black" and "Jane the Virgin" is working on a memoir scheduled for early 2016.

The book is called "In the Country We Love," and will tell of her family's ordeal when her parents and older brother were taken

from their home in Boston and deported to Colombia in 2000. Guerrero was 14 at the time and continued to live in the U.S., attending the Boston Arts Academy high school. She now volunteers for the Immigrant Legal Resource Center, which advocates for immigrants' rights.

According to Holt, Guerrero will "cast a much-needed light" on the fears of deportation faced by many immigrant families. □



In this May 15, 2014 file photo, actress Diane Guerrero attends Netflix's "Orange Is the New Black" Season 2 premiere at the Ziegfeld Theatre in New York.

Associated Press



## 9 films advance in Oscars shortlist for best foreign film



In this image released by the Cohen Media Group, Edgar Ramirez portrays Simon Bolivar in a scene from the film, "The Libertador," one of nine films in contention for an Oscar nomination for best foreign film.

Associated Press

LINDSEY BAHR

Associated Press Film Writer  
LOS ANGELES (AP) —

The list of contenders for best foreign film got a bit smaller Friday as the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences announced the nine features that will advance to the next round of voting.

Included are Ruben Ostlund's patriarchy-skewering avalanche film "Force Majeure" from Sweden, Andrey Zvyagintsev's "Leviathan," about a property dispute in a small Russian coastal town, and Pawel Pawlikowski's Polish drama "Ida," about a young woman with dreams of being a nun who discovers some dark secrets in her family's past. All recently received Golden Globe nominations, too.

Damian Szifron's black ensemble comedy "Wild Tales," from Argentina, also made the shortlist, as did Estonia's "Tangerines," the Golden Globe-nominated film about a man caring for a wounded soldier.

Other films on the shortlist include Abderrahmane Sissako's "Timbuktu," the first Mauritanian film ever submitted, Georgia's "Corn Island," the Netherlands'

"Accused," and Venezuela's "The Libertador."

Missing from the list were a few high profile films, such as the Palme d'Or-winning drama "Two Days, One Night," from the Dardenne brothers. Star Marion Cotillard has been singled out for her performance as a young mother in a desperate situation in a number of recent critics' awards. Eighty three countries submitted films for consideration. Xavier Dolan's critically beloved coming-of-age drama "Mommy" also failed to make the cut.

Of the 83 countries who submitted entries, six were chosen by a committee of several hundred Academy members based in Los Angeles who were tasked with screening the original submissions.

Three additional features were then added by the Academy's Foreign Language Film Award Executive Committee.

The five final nominees will be selected from this group of films and announced, along with the other Academy Award nominees, live on Jan. 15. Winners will be presented at the 87th Academy Awards on Feb. 22. □



In this Dec. 9, 2014 photo, Smashing Pumpkins frontman Billy Corgan poses for a portrait in promotion of the band's new album "Monuments To An Elegy" in New York.

Associated Press

## Smashing Pumpkins' Corgan looks ahead, not back

BY JILL LAWLESS

Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The Smashing Pumpkins are dead. Long live the Smashing Pumpkins.

It's fair to say lead singer Billy Corgan has an ambivalent relationship with his band — as well as with the music industry, the media, fellow musicians and his fans.

"People say, 'Are you going to break up the band?'" Corgan said backstage before a recent London show. "What band is there to break up? There is no band."

Corgan may be the Pumpkins' only remaining original member, but the non-band has just released its eighth studio album, "Monuments to an Elegy." A slice of grungy pop-rock featuring guitarist Jeff Schroeder, who joined the Pumpkins in 2007, and Motley Crue drummer Tommy Lee, it's received good reviews — though not good enough for Corgan.

"There's no way this is a three-out-of-five record," he said, grumbling about one newspaper's assessment.

You might think that sounds a bit thin-skinned for the man behind two best-selling 1990s albums — "Siamese Dream" and "Mellon

Collie and the Infinite Sadness" — now regarded as classics.

But Corgan is not the type to rest on his laurels. He says he abhors nostalgia, and turned down good money to do a retro "Siamese Dream" tour.

"I know exactly where that goes," he said. "That's Vegas."

Corgan is an icon of '90s American indie rock, perhaps second only to his late friend Kurt Cobain.

In the decades since, Corgan has revealed a willingness to speak his mind on everything from politics to astrology and a knack for nursing a grudge. He has had a public spat with Cobain's widow, Courtney Love, and recently berated Anderson Cooper after the CNN host poked fun at Corgan's cat-cuddling cover shoot for Paws Chicago magazine.

Swaddled in a sweater and scarf backstage at a London club, 47-year-old Corgan is sensitive to the cold — and to criticism. He is alternately confident and insecure of his place in music history, which makes him both prickly and refreshingly honest.

"Imagine if every week of your life for the rest of your life somebody'd be walking down the street going

'Here's a picture of you when you were 18. Didn't you have a better hairstyle then? Look at this T-shirt you were wearing. Don't you want to wear that T-shirt again?' That's what it's like," he said.

"It's a mirrored paradigm which you cannot escape. And if you complain, which I have, you're not grateful." He's had his ups and downs, but feels with the new record that he's regaining his musical mojo.

"This is the best reaction I've had on an album, up off the street, in 20 years," Corgan said.

He says creativity is a funny thing. "When you have it, it feels like a font that just flows through you, and everything gets real easy. And then one day it sort of slows down or it stops and you tell yourself, 'I'm just having a bad day or a bad month.' And then next thing you know, people start doubting you, you don't have that magic touch. And then you start doubting yourself."

Corgan plans to release a companion album to "Monuments to an Elegy," — titled "Day For Night" — in late 2015.

He says he has finally embraced the philosophy of Popeye: "I yam what I yam." □



## Wall Street's Revenge



**PAUL KRUGMAN**  
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On Wall Street, 2010 was the year of "Obama rage," in which financial tycoons went ballistic over the president's suggestion that some bankers helped cause the financial crisis. They were also, of course, angry about the Dodd-Frank financial reform, which placed some limits on their wheeling and dealing. The Masters of the Universe, it turns out, are a bunch of whiners. But they're whiners with war chests, and now they've bought themselves a Congress. Before I get to specifics, a word about the changing politics of high finance.

Most interest groups have stable political loyalties. For example, the coal industry always gives the vast bulk of its political contributions to Republicans, while teachers' unions do the same for Democrats. You might have expected Wall Street to favor the GOP, which is always eager to cut taxes on the rich. In fact, however, the securities and investment industry - perhaps affected by New York's social liberalism, perhaps recognizing the tendency of stocks to do much better when Democrats hold the White House - has historically split its support more or less equally between the two parties. But that all changed with the onset of Obama rage. Wall Street overwhelmingly backed Mitt Romney in 2012, and invested heavily in Republicans once again this year. And the first payoff to that investment has already been realized. Last week Congress passed a bill to maintain funding for the U.S. government into next year, and included in that bill was a rollback of one provision of the 2010 financial reform.

In itself, this rollback is significant but not a fatal blow to reform. But it's utterly indefensible. The incoming congressional majority has revealed its agenda - and it's all about rewarding bad actors. So, about that provision. One of the goals of financial reform was to stop banks from taking big risks with depositors' money. Why? Well, bank deposits are insured against loss, and this creates a well-known problem of "moral hazard": If banks are free to gamble, they can play a game of heads we win, tails the taxpayers lose. That's what happened

after savings-and-loan institutions were deregulated in the 1980s, and promptly ran wild.

Dodd-Frank tried to limit this kind of moral hazard in various ways, including a rule barring insured institutions from dealing in exotic securities, the kind that played such a big role in the financial crisis.

And that's the rule that has just been rolled back.

Now, this isn't the death of financial reform. In fact, I'd argue that regulating insured banks is something of a sideshow, since the 2008 crisis was brought on mainly by uninsured institutions like Lehman Bros. and AIG. The really important parts of reform involve consumer protection and the enhanced ability of regulators both to police the actions of "systemically important" financial institutions (which needn't be conventional banks) and to take such institutions into receivership at times of crisis.

But what Congress did is still outrageous - and both sides of the ideological divide should agree. After all, even if you believe (in defiance of the lessons of history) that financial institutions can be trusted to police themselves, even if you believe the grotesquely false narrative that bleeding-heart liberals caused the financial crisis by pressuring banks to lend to poor people, especially minority borrowers, you should be against letting Wall Street play games with government-guaranteed funds. What just went down isn't about free-market economics; it's pure crony capitalism.

And sure enough, Citigroup literally wrote the deregulation language that was inserted into the funding bill.

Again, in itself last week's action wasn't decisive. But it was clearly the first skirmish in a war to roll back much if not all of the financial reform. And if you want to know who stands where in this coming war, follow the money: Wall Street is giving mainly to Republicans for a reason.

It's true that most of the political headlines these past few days have been about Democratic division, with Sen. Elizabeth Warren urging rejection of a funding bill the White House wanted passed. But this was mainly a divide about tactics, with few Democrats actually believing that undoing Dodd-Frank is a good idea.

Meanwhile, it's hard to find Republicans expressing major reservations about undoing reform. You sometimes hear claims that the Tea Party is as opposed to bailing out bankers as it is to aiding the poor, but there's no sign that this alleged hostility to Wall Street is having any influence at all on Republican priorities.

So the people who brought the economy to its knees are seeking the chance to do it all over again. And they have powerful allies, who are doing all they can to make Wall Street's dream come true. □



## When Football Gets the Ax



**JOE NOCERA**  
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The most unpopular man in Birmingham, Alabama, these days is Dr. Ray Watts, the president of the University of Alabama-Birmingham. Earlier this month, Watts announced that the school was going to eliminate its football team. You can just imagine what happened next.

When Watts told the team that this would be their last season, one player, Tristan Henderson, angrily challenged him in a video that quickly went viral. Later, several hundred supporters chanted and cheered for the coach, and heckled and chased Watts and his police escort, according to Jon Solomon of CBSsports.com. Mark Emmert, the president of the NCAA, described Watts' decision as "unfortunate." A group of important donors wrote a letter to the chancellor of the Alabama university system, calling for an investigation into Watts' decision. Another big supporter, a Birmingham restaurateur, canceled his \$45,000 sponsorship of a television network that aired UAB games and ended the use of his restaurant as the locale for the basketball coach's weekly radio show.

"This is so tragic," he told a reporter. "It's like a death." Watts, it turns out, is a Birmingham native who played football in high school and who attended

the university. He gets how important football is in Alabama. But in pulling together a five-year strategic plan for the school, he came to the obvious conclusion that it simply made no sense to continue fielding a football team. (The school is also eliminating its bowling and rifle teams.)

"Our athletic budget is \$30 million," he told me when we spoke. Of that amount, \$20 million comes directly from the school - either through student fees or direct subsidies from the overall university budget. A consultant Watts hired concluded that it would cost an additional \$49 million over the next five years to keep the football team competitive with the other schools in Conference USA.

"We could not justify subsidizing football if it meant taking away from other priorities," he said. Then he added, "This is driven significantly by the changing landscape of intercollegiate athletics."

Ah, yes, the changing landscape. Let me explain. For the last year or more, the big boys in college athletics - the 64 schools that make up the top five conferences, plus Notre Dame - have been agitating for more freedom to make their own rules. They want, for instance, to be able to give their athletes a stipend that goes beyond a scholarship and more fully reflects the "full cost of attendance."

And through their conference commissioners, the power schools issued a series of veiled threats that if they didn't get more autonomy, they just might bolt from the NCAA.

Not surprisingly, they got their autonomy. The additional benefits will probably cost each of these schools several million additional dollars per year. But universities like Michigan and Auburn and Notre Dame can afford it. It's the UAB's of the world - the so-called mid-majors - that have to decide whether to match the benefits the big schools are giving to athletes or go in another direction.

I have no problem with the power schools giving athletes more benefits; indeed, I'm in favor of it. But what I always thought would happen when this day came - when the financial difference between the power schools and everybody else became overwhelming - is that the smaller schools in Division 1 would be forced to rethink their priorities, just as UAB has. Maybe not get out of football altogether, but de-emphasize it so that the tail finally stops wagging the dog.

But so far, at least, that is not turning out to be the case. At a college sports conference last week in New York, nobody gave UAB any credit for pulling out of football. On the contrary: most of the athletic directors in the room were adamant that they would pay whatever they had to pay to keep pace with the big boys.

"Our board is totally committed to athletics and competing at the highest level," said Chris May, the athletic director at Saint Louis University. "We are going to be very aggressive."

"There is no pressure to drop football," said Mike O'Brien of the University of Toledo. "It is too important to our university."

When you ask people why it is so important, you get similar responses: a good football team means more applications; it helps generate donations; it is something the community can rally around.

"In many ways, football is our front porch," said Nagi Nagathan, the interim president of the University of Toledo.

Yet schools that have dropped football have lived to tell the tale. In 1995, the University of the Pacific dropped football - the last major school to do so before UAB.

"Since then, their enrollment has actually gone up," emailed David Ridpath, an associate professor of sports management at Ohio University.

"Football," he added, "doesn't define a university." Unfortunately, for too many schools, it does. □



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